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Contents / İçindekiler

From Editor / Editörden

1-6 1 Şinasi GÜNDÜZ

The Critique of Zionism: The Fiction of Chosen People of God and the Promised Land, and the Occupation of Palestine

Siyonizm Eleştirisi: Tanrı'nın Seçilmiş Halkı ve Vaat Edilmiş Topraklar Kurgusu ve Filistin'in İşgali

Research Articles / Araştırma makaleleri

7-24 1 Mehmet Fahri DANIŞ

Canaanism: The Search for an Alternative Identity to Zionism in Israel

Kenanlık: İsrail'de Siyonizme Alternatif Bir Kimlik Arayışı

25-46 1 Mehmet RAKİPOĞLU

Zionism and Academic Hegemony: The Intersection of Power, Knowledge, and Suppression in the United States Universities

Siyonizm ve Akademik Hegemonya: Güç, Bilgi ve Baskının ABD Üniversitelerindeki Kesşimi

47-73 1 Servet DOĞAN & Mahmut AYDIN

Christian Zionism and Its Impact on USA Politics

Hiristiyan Siyonizmi ve ABD Siyasetine Etkisi

75-92 1 Fatih TUNA

Understanding the USA's Support for Israel within the Context of Christian Zionism

ABD'nin İsrail'e Destęini Hiristiyan Siyonizmi Baęlamında Anlamak

93-105 1 Filiz ORHAN ÇAĞLAYAN

Rationalization of Evil through Media: A Twitter Discourse Analysis on Israel's Genocide against Palestine after October 7

Medya Aracılıęıyla Kötülüęün Rasyonelleştirilmesi: 7 Ekim'den Sonra İsrail'in Filistin'e Yönelik Soykırımına Dair Twitter Üzerinden Bir Söylem Analizi

107-135 1 Semiha KARAHAN

The Concept of Time and the Future Perception of Zionism Based on the Messianic Doctrine: Forcing God into the Golden Age

Mesih Doktrini Üzerinden Zaman Kavramı ve Siyonizmin Gelecek Algısı: Tanrı'yu Altın Çaę'a Zorlamak

137-155 1 Leyla KUŞASLAN

The Contradictory Legacy of Zionism: Radical Religious Groups

Siyonizm'in Çelişkili Mirası: Radikal Dini Gruplar



The Critique of Zionism: The Fiction of Chosen People of God and the Promised Land, and the Occupation of Palestine

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Abstract

This article explores the historical, religious, and political foundations of Zionism and its impact on the ongoing occupation of Palestine. Originating in the late 19th century, Zionism initially began as a secular movement driven by the nationalist ideologies of Europe, advocating for a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Over time, however, it became intertwined with religious beliefs, particularly the Jewish concept of the "Chosen People" and the "Promised Land," both of which form the ideological bedrock of Zionism. The article traces the origins of these doctrines, rooted in biblical narratives, and examines how they contributed to the idea of Jewish return to Palestine, a concept long shared by Christian eschatological movements as well. The religious foundation of Zionism is critically assessed, especially in light of the historical exclusionary narratives that have marginalized Arabs, particularly Palestinians, by framing them as descendants of biblical enemies. The article also discusses the British role in facilitating the Zionist project, through both political and economic motivations, alongside religious and eschatological factors, particularly among Christian Zionists. By examining these interconnected factors—Jewish religious claims, Christian support, and Western imperial interests—the article highlights how the occupation of Palestine is justified both through political and religious ideologies, with far-reaching implications for the ongoing conflict in the region.

Keywords: Zionism, Occupation of Palestine, Promised Land, Chosen People.

Siyonizm Eleştirisi: Tanrı'nın Seçilmiş Halkı ve Vaat Edilmiş Topraklar Kurgusu ve Filistin'in İşgali

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Öz

Bu makale Siyonizm'in tarihi, dini ve siyasi temellerini ve Filistin'deki işgal üzerindeki etkisini incelemektedir. 19. yüzyılın sonlarında ortaya çıkan Siyonizm, başlangıçta Avrupa'nın milliyetçi ideolojileri tarafından yönlendirilen ve Filistin'de bir Yahudi anavatanını savunan seküler bir hareket olarak belirmiştir. Ancak zamanla dini inançlarla, özellikle de Siyonizm'in ideolojik temelini oluşturan Yahudilerin "Seçilmiş Halk" ve "Vaat Edilmiş Topraklar" kavramlarıyla iç içe geçmiştir. Bu makale, Kitab-ı Mukaddes'teki anlatılara dayanan bu doktrinlerin kökenlerinin izini sürmekte ve uzun süredir Hıristiyan eskatolojik hareketler tarafından da paylaşılan bir kavram olan "Yahudilerin Filistin'e dönüşü" fikrine nasıl katkıda bulduklarını incelemektedir. Siyonizm'in dini temeli, özellikle Araçları ve bilhassa Filistinlileri Tanah pasajlarındaki İsrailoğullarının düşmanlarının torunları olarak çerçevelenerek ötekileştiren tarihsel dışlayıcı anlatılar ışığında eleştirel bir şekilde değerlendirilmektedir. Makalede ayrıca, özellikle Hıristiyan Siyonistler arasında dini ve eskatolojik faktörlerin yanı sıra hem siyasi hem de ekonomik motivasyonlar yoluyla Siyonist projenin kolaylaştırılmasında İngilizlerin rolü de tartışılmaktadır. Birbirine bağlantılı bu faktörleri -Yahudi dini iddiaları, Hıristiyan desteği ve Batı'nın emperyal çıkarları- inceleyen makale, Filistin'in işgalinin hem siyasi hem de dini ideolojiler aracılığıyla nasıl meşrulaştırıldığını ele almakta ve bunun bölgede devam eden çatışma üzerinde geniş kapsamlı etkileri olduğunu vurgulamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Siyonizm, Filistin'in işgali, Vaat edilmiş topraklar, Seçilmiş halk.

This special issue of *Milel ve Nihal* deals with the emergence of Zionism, its background, and the problems caused by the Zionist occupation in Palestine today. I would like to thank Abdullah Maruf Ömer from Istanbul 29 Mayıs University for editing this special issue.

It is well known that Zionism emerged in the late 19th century as a secular movement initially influenced by the trend of nation-state ideology in Europe with the ideology of creating a homeland in Palestine for the Jews living in the Diaspora. This secular movement was later transformed into a movement using predominantly such religious arguments as the promised land and the Jews as the chosen people of God. It is also known that the idea of the return of the Jews to Palestine is not exclusive to the Jews, as there have long been advocates of this among the Christians as well. As a matter of fact, the idea of the return of the Jews to Palestine has been kept on the agenda by various Christian movements as part of their eschatological expectations concerning the doctrine of Parousia since at least the 18th century. That is why those so-called Christian Zionists are wholeheartedly supporters of the idea of restoration of Jewish sovereignty in Palestine and therefore the occupation of Palestine.

The doctrine that the Jews, identified with the Israelites are the Chosen People and the idea of the Promised Land for this chosen people are the main religious basis of Zionism. Judaism with its ethnocentric characteristics accordingly makes a reading of history centered on the ethnic identity of the Israelites; it identifies the ethnic identity of the Israelites with Judaism and places the perception of the Israelites as the chosen people at the very center of the historical process. Accordingly, all of history is the process of the covenant regarding the election of the Israelites, the preparation of humanity for the reality of this election, and the fulfilment of the promise of election.

The Jewish tradition holds that God, through Abraham, made a special covenant with the Israelites, who are defined as ‘His own people’ (Genesis 17:5-10). The essence of the message contained in this divine covenant with Abraham and his descendants is not to have other gods and not to worship idols. According to Jewish belief, two issues come to the fore in this covenant with Abraham: The chosenness of the Israelites as an ethnic identity, their privilege from other peoples in the eyes of God, and the land promised to this chosen people by God.

According to Jewish scripture, God will continue His covenant with Abraham and his descendants from the time of Abraham. However, this covenant will not be continued with everyone born to Abraham, but with Isaac. By saying, ‘Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac ... with him and with his seed I will keep my covenant forever’ (Genesis 17:19), God has indicated that this promise does not include all the descendants of Abraham, the ‘father of nations’, but only the descendants of Isaac. That is why Ishmael, who is characterized as a son of Abraham but born of a slave woman, and his descendants are excluded from this covenant. Similarly, not everyone born to Isaac is subject to the covenant; among Isaac’s children, the covenant will be maintained only with Jacob. Esau, Isaac’s other son and Jacob’s twin brother, is also outside this covenant. Although Esau was born before his twin brother Jacob, the covenant will not be maintained through him, but through Jacob, who will later be named Israel. Jewish tradition emphasizes that Esau sold his firstborn sonship to Jacob in exchange for a loaf of bread and pottage of lentils (Genesis 25:29-34), thus excluding Esau, Jacob’s twin brother who was born before him, from this promise (Genesis 27:35-38). According to the Jewish tradition, with Jacob, the covenant

God had heralded to the descendants of Abraham came into being with the Israelites. Thus, a new era in human history began with Jacob and his sons, a phase in which God's chosen people appeared on the history stage.

As will be noted here, in the context of the doctrine of the Israelite ethnicity as a chosen nation, a holy lineage is constructed from the sons of Jacob to Abraham, and people such as Ishmael, the eldest son of Abraham, and Esau, the eldest son of Isaac, who are seen as contrary to this lineage, are excluded. Moreover, they are identified as the ancestors of peoples such as the Arabs and Amalekites, who have historically been labeled as opponents and enemies of the Israelites. It is worth bearing in mind here the statements calling for the massacre of the Amalekites in the Book of Samuel (1 Samuel 15:3) and the theopolitics of the Israeli Prime Minister legitimizing the massacre of the Palestinians by labeling them as Amalekites.

The marginalization of the historical opponents and enemies of the divinely chosen lineage is not limited to those considered outside the divine covenant in the lineage from Jacob to Abraham. A similar approach applies to the children of Noah, who is considered the second ancestor of humanity. The Israelites are thought to be descended from Sam (Shem), one of the sons of Noah, while the Canaanites, the historical enemies of the Israelites, are believed to be the descendants of Ham, another son of Noah. The superiority of Noah's son Sam over Ham is based on an origin myth. According to this myth, when his father Noah got drunk and walked around naked, Ham laughed at him, while Sam and his brother Japhet covered his father and tried to protect him from this shame (Genesis 9: 20-22). Because of this, Canaan, the ancestor of the Canaanites, one of the historical enemies of the Israelites, was punished by God for being a servant to his brothers (Genesis 9: 25-26). All of this has been evaluated in the context of the historical background to the teaching about the difference and superiority of the Israelites as God's chosen people. While the Israelites and their descendants are glorified and blessed, the peoples and their descendants, who are described as historical opponents or enemies of the Israelites, are almost 'demonized' and marginalized.

In Jewish scripture, the Israelites are described as 'God's own people,' 'a holy people' (Deuteronomy 7:6, 14:1-2), 'the Son of God', and 'the firstborn of God' (Hosea 11:1, Exodus 4:22-23). Their position is emphasized as superior and privileged over all other peoples (Leviticus 20:26, Deuteronomy 26:19).

According to the Jewish belief, God promised the holy land (*eretz ha kodesh*) to this chosen people in the context of His covenant with Abraham, saying 'I will give to you and your descendants the land where you lived as a stranger, the whole land of Canaan, to be your possession forever. I will be their God' (Genesis 17:8). The land promised to the Israelites as the chosen people is also clearly stated.

"To your descendants, I will give this land from the river of Egypt to the great river Euphrates, the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaims, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites." (Genesis 15:18-21).

Accordingly, Abraham, who originally settled in Ur in the land of Aram in Southern Mesopotamia, and his chosen descendants are promised the lands from Egypt to the Euphrates, where many peoples from Canaanites to Perizzites, from Hittites to Jebusites live.

This doctrine of the chosen people of God and the land promised to this chosen nation has occupied an important place in the Jewish mindset throughout history. As a matter of

fact, in the context of current events, it is known that various Jewish clergymen and politicians from time to time refer to it in one way or another. The following problem naturally draws attention here: Why did God choose the Israelites as His 'own people' or 'son of God' and no other ethnic identities or other peoples, and why did He promise the lands of the Philistines, Hittites, Canaanites and similar peoples who had been living in this region for generations between Egypt and the Euphrates to a people who were originally strangers here, the Israelites, the descendants of Abraham? Does this conform to divine justice?

The Jewish mindset has a clear answer to these questions. First of all, the Jewish tradition believes that since the first man Adam, God has made various covenants with humanity in general in the person of Adam and Noah, but that humanity has failed, so to speak, in terms of the promises made to God in these covenants. Accordingly, God finally made a covenant with Abraham and his descendants, the Israelites, who responded positively to God's covenant. Thus, these people who responded positively to the divine covenant were distinguished as "chosen people". As for the holy land promised to God's chosen people, Judaism believes that the peoples living in this land, both by adopting other gods and becoming idolaters, and by being descended from people known for their negative character, who were not deemed suitable for the divine promise in terms of origin and lineage, did not actually have a right to this land, and therefore it was decided by the divine will that this land belonged to the Israelites, that is, the Jews. In line with the legitimization of this idea, the Jewish tradition emphasizes many narratives about the negative character of these peoples and the ancestors from whom these nations descended.

As a matter of fact, many narratives about the origin and negative character of these peoples, such as the divine decree that the Canaanites should be slaves to their brothers (Genesis 9:25-26), and that the Moabites and Ammonites are a wild and cruel generation derived from the incestuous relationship between Prophet Lot and his daughters (Genesis 19:30-38, Judges 3:11, 28), are included in the Jewish sacred text.

It is discussed that such doctrines as the belief that the Israelites are the chosen people of God and the conception of the promised land to this chosen people have emerged in times of social and political trauma and chaos in the history of the Israelites. The period of the Babylonian exile in particular led to many inquiries into the painful experiences of the Israelite nation. It is known that a policy based on an ethnic identity-centered understanding of religion was put into effect among the Jews returning from exile by 'Ezra the scribe' in the post-exile period, and in this direction, marriages outside the Israelite ethnicity were prohibited among the Jews. The Babylonian king Nabuchadnezzar's destruction of the state of Judah, Jerusalem, and the temple and the forced exile of a significant part of the people in Babylon caused serious trauma among the Jews. The Jews who experienced this catastrophe and exile asked themselves why this happened and why they were punished by God in this way. From the actions of Ezra at the end of the exile, it is understood that the Jewish clergy answered this question as the disruption of the ethnicity of the Israelites through ethnic and cultural exchange and intermarriage with other the peoples of the region. Thus, in terms of the divine promise, an idea of ethnic identity-centered chosenness has been placed at the centre of the Jewish mindset and a sacred history narrative has been constructed retrospectively in the Jewish sacred text in the context of legitimizing such doctrine of the chosen nation. Accordingly, in the Jewish tradition, the doctrine of the Israelites as the

chosen people and the holy land promised to this chosen nation has been tried to be legitimized by a sacred myth of lineage and history constructed retrospectively.

This understanding of the idea of ethnically chosen people of God and the promised land in Judaism has been one of the main pillars of Zionism. The idea of creating a state for Jews in the Holy Land was the main motivation for Zionism. In this way, Jews living in the diaspora would have a nation-state and the Jewish problem in Europe would be solved, as one of Theodor Herzl's articles was titled, "A Solution of the Jewish Question". Accordingly, the main agenda item of the early Zionist congresses organized from 1892 onwards was how to create this Jewish state. It is known that a series of developments, including the establishment of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, took place in the context of laying the groundwork for this project, and finally, the British foreign minister of the time, Arthur Balfour, promised Rothschild 'a national homeland for the Jews in Palestine' with a declaration dated 2 November 1917 in the context of 'sympathy for the Zionist aspirations of the Jews', and in the same year, the British occupied Palestine and prepared the environment that enabled the encouragement of Jewish immigration and the de facto establishment of Israel in time.

Undoubtedly, there are various political, military, and economic reasons why the British promised a state to the Jews in Palestine and subsequently occupied Palestine. These reasons include controlling the waterways, especially the Suez, and the underground resources in the region, and designing the region in line with their interests after the First World War. However, it is also a fact that encouraging the immigration of Jews to Palestine through an occupation to be established in Palestine is important both in terms of the solution of the Jewish issue, which has long been seen as a problem in the Christian West, and in terms of eschatological expectations in the Christian tradition.

First of all, such an endeavor was considered important for the solution of the problem of Jews living in Christian Western countries, which has caused outrage in society since the Middle Ages. There is a 'Jewish problem' in the Christian West; there is a serious discomfort caused by Jews and anti-Semitism, which is a manifestation of this problem. As a matter of fact, as mentioned above, Theodor Herzl, whose name is associated with Jewish Zionism, was aware of this problem. Herzl emphasized an existing Jewish problem and tried to find a solution to it. Indeed, the Jews, with their unassimilated nature and their generally introverted, protective ghetto life, have always been seen as a thorn in the side of Christian peoples and have been persecuted from time to time, as was the case in England in the 13th century and the Iberian Peninsula in the 15th century. Religious leaders such as Martin Luther, one of the pioneers of Protestant Christianity, incited the public against Jews through their writings and sermons. In this context, various accusations such as 'blood libel' were made against Jews in the Middle Ages and later. Considering all these, the British promise to establish a state for the Jews in Palestine is like a solution to this 'Jewish problem' in Christian Europe.

Aside from this, there is a significant segment of the Christian tradition that believes that the return of the Jews to the holy land promised to them in the holy book is important for the eschatological expectation of Christianity. Some Christian groups, especially in line with the 'sola scriptura' understanding of the Reformation period, have been in the expectation of a lively future period based on the literal meaning of the Bible. In this direction, it is known that at least since the beginning of the nineteenth century, various Christian groups,

especially in the context of the Protestant tradition, have had a strong expectation that the Jews should return to Palestine, to the region of Judea, in the context of the narrative of the chosen people of God, i.e. the Israelites, and the promised land. Based on various Biblical passages, these groups have fierce expectations concerning the exiled Jews returned to Palestine (Deuteronomy 30:3, Isaiah 43:6, Ezekiel 34: 11-13), to build the Temple there (Dan 9:27, Matthew 4:5, Rev 11:1), to be attacked by the surrounding nations (Dan 9:26-27, 12:1, 11, Zech 11:16), and so on. These Christians believed that the return of the Jews to Palestine was essential for Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to descend to the earth, establish the Kingdom of God there, and start a golden age, and they consequently endeavored at every opportunity to encourage the return of the Jews to Palestine and to produce projects in this regard.

In this direction, since the late 18th century, various Christian writers, such as James Bicheno and Thomas Witherby, have written in the context of a restoration project for the Jews to return to Palestine with the help of European powers. Moreover, on 23 February 1841, the Colonial Times published an article titled 'Memorandum to Protestant Monarchs of Europe for the restoration of the Jews to Palestine' in which Christian governments in Europe were asked to produce projects on this issue. In the following period, various churches, which came to the forefront with their dispensationalist approaches to the future period, carried out an intensive campaign for the Jews to return to Palestine, to establish a sovereign nation-state there, and to build the third temple in Jerusalem.

This restoration project, which is expressed by Christian groups that the Jews should return to Palestine as soon as possible, shows that the idea of establishing a state for the Jews in Palestine, which is the main motivation of Zionism, was present in the minds of these Christians even before the term Zionism entered the literature. Although the term Zionism entered the literature for the first time in the late 19th century, Zionism as a way of thinking has been present in the Christian tradition from much earlier periods. As a matter of fact, when the First Zionist Congress convened in 1897, among its participants were Christians such as Jean Henry Dunant (1828-1910). These Christians, who wholeheartedly support Jewish Zionism, are called 'Christian Zionists', and today this very influential group especially in North America and Western Europe, stands out with their unlimited support for the occupation of Palestine. Christian Zionists believe that Jews are chosen as an ethnic identity and that the land promised to them is a product of divine will, and therefore any support for the settlement of Jews in Palestine and their domination there is a religious obligation for them.

As a result, the occupation of Palestine is justified not only by the political, military, and economic interests of the global powers in the context of colonialism and imperialism, but also by strong religious arguments in the context of Jewish people as an ethnically chosen nation of God and the doctrine of the promised land for this chosen people. However, the belief in the Jews as a chosen nation and the Promised Land is purely retrospective fiction since the statements in the Bible on this subject are produced in the context of a retrospective construction of history based on traumatic events in the history of the Israelites.

§



Canaanism: The Search for an Alternative Identity to Zionism in Israel

► Araştırma makalesi / Research article

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Abstract

Zionism, as Israel's founding ideological movement, aimed to construct a national identity through the Jewish religious tradition while presenting itself as a form of secular nationalism. This paradox—the incorporation of religious elements into a secular identity—has shaped the core "Traditionalist-Secular" divide in Israeli politics and emerged as a significant obstacle to forming a coherent nation-state identity. The official conception of Israeli identity has consistently reflected tensions between tradition and modernity, fostering the development of dissenting political positions from the state's early years. One notable response was the Canaanite movement, developed by a group of artists and intellectuals in the 1930s. Led by poet-journalist Yonatan Ratosh, the movement, known as the "Young Hebrews," critiqued Zionism's vision of identity and proposed an alternative nationalist discourse. Highlighting the distinction between Jewishness and Hebrewness, the Canaanites argued for the institutionalization of Israel as a secular nation-state. They posited that national identity should be rooted not in the religious affiliation of Jewishness but in the ethnic and geographical identity of Hebrewness. This study examines the contradictory nature of Zionist national identity and the critical nationalist response articulated by the Canaanite movement.

Keywords: Canaanism, Zionism, Young Hebrews.

Kenancılık: İsrail'de Siyonizme Alternatif Bir Kimlik Arayışı

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Öz

İsrail'in kurucu fikir hareketi olarak Siyonizm, seküler bir milliyetçilik biçimi olarak Yahudi dini geleneği üzerinden ulusal bir kimlik inşa edilmesini hedeflemiştir. İsrail siyasetindeki temel "Gelenekselci-Laik" ikiliğini de şekillendiren bu paradoksal durum –seküler bir kimliğin özünü oluşturan dinî öğeler meselesi– tutarlı bir ulus-devlet kimliği oluşturulmasının önündeki en önemli engellerden biri olmuştur. İsrail'de iktidardan resmi kimlik tahayyülü her daim geleneksel ile modern arasındaki bu kırılmadan izler taşımış ve bu durum, henüz erken devirlerden itibaren muhalif siyasal pozisyonların oluşumunu beraberinde getirmiştir. Bunlardan biri de 1930'lu yıllarda, İsrail'de bir grup sanatçı-entelektüel tarafından geliştirilen Kenancılıktır. Kendilerini "Genç İbraniler" olarak adlandıran ve başlarını şair-gazeteci Yonatan Ratosh'un çektiği bu grup, İsrail'de kurucu Siyonizm'in kimlik tahayyülünü sert bir şekilde eleştirerek yeni bir milliyetçi söylem biçimi ortaya koymuştur. Yahudilik (Jewish) ile İbranilik (Hebrew) arasındaki farka dikkat çeken Kenancılar, İsrail'in seküler bir ulus-devlet olarak kurumsallaşması gerekliliğini ifade etmiş ve ulusal kimliğin temelini de dini bir aidiyet olan Yahudîğin değil, etnik ve coğrafi bir aidiyeti ifade eden İbranîliğin oluşturduğunu ileri sürmüşlerdir. Bu çalışmada, Siyonizm'in inşa ettiği ulusal kimlik anlayışının çelişkili karakteri vurgulanarak, buna eleştirel bir milliyetçi pozisyondan yanıt veren Kenancı hareketin bir inceleme yapılabileceği tartışılmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kenancılık, Siyonizm, Genç İbraniler.

Introduction

The historical event in itself, however important, does not remain in the popular memory, nor does its recollection kindle the poetic imagination save insofar as the particular historical event closely approaches a mythical model.¹

Despite their contemporary character, national identities are mostly mythological constructs of belonging. More accurately, their potency is derived from the myths they include, even though their "construction" results from scientific and intellectual work. Because myths ignore secular, continuous time, they offer a supra-historical meaning and experience that gives reality a legitimate perspective. As Eliade pointed out, myths must exist in the background of identity for the "historical event" to activate the "poetic imagination", or, in other words, for that identity to take on a tangible form.

In modern Israel, national identity is formed around myths that the founding Zionist ideology methodically brought to the political arena. The ownership claim to the "holy lands," which acquires significance when viewed in the context of the "exile" and "return" motifs, reveals the mythical and religious components that contributed to the formation of contemporary national identity. Even now, there is a great deal of controversy around the relation between Judaism and Israeli identity. Different facets of Israel's identity crisis are highlighted by non-Jewish Israeli citizens (Palestinian Arabs), Beta Israel's² socioeconomic standing, and the class struggle between Sephardic, Mizrahi, and Ashkenazi communities. The question of who is "more" Israeli and who is not is often left unanswered by this identity-based paradox. Largely, this lies at the core of the state of Israel and the Israeli identity, a modern-secular political idea and the theological legitimacy fiction behind it.

Israel is a nation-state that was established on the principle of territoriality, in theory. Zionist thought, formed by the influence of nationalist ideas that flourished in Europe in the second half of the 19th century, established a nation-state imagination around the Enlightenment and secular values. This group of Jewish intellectuals, who were secular and very pragmatic, started a radical process of identity creation intending to transform Judaism—which is situated at the problematic junction of ethnic and religious affiliation—into a contemporary national identity. Beginning at the turn of the 20th century, many Old Testament-based stories as well as the whole cultural fabric contributes color to the Jewish religious identity.

As a natural consequence of this situation, terms such as Jew, Judaic, Hebrew, Israeli, and even Canaanite are often used interchangeably. The conceptual distinction between "Jew," "Hebrew," and "Judaic," which refer to ethno-religious identities, and "Israeli," a modern national identity, is notably blurred.³ The nationalization of ethno-religious

¹ Mircea Eliade, *Cosmos and History: The Myth of Eternal Return*, tr. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1959), 42.

² The group, also known as Ethiopian Jews or *Falasha*, was brought to Israel through various waves of immigration and even official operations of the state of Israel starting in 1948. About Beta Israel, see: Steven Kaplan, *The Beta Israel (Falasha) in Ethiopia: From Earliest Times to the Twentieth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1995).

³ One reason for this overlap lies in the similarity of related terms in Hebrew. In the Old Testament, the word *goy* roughly means "nation," but it is almost exclusively used to refer to non-Jews. In modern Hebrew, the terms *le'om* and *uma* are preferred as equivalents for "nation," both of which have Biblical origins. Additionally, in nearly all history books published in Israel, the word *am* is used as a synonym for *le'om*. *Am* is also derived from

identities during the modern era (or their reinterpretation in more ethnically-oriented terms) represents a unique phenomenon, largely specific to the Middle East. Intellectuals from minority groups, such as Lebanese Maronites, Druzes, Armenians, Assyrians, and Nusayris, have developed nationalist discourses based on their respective communities, drawing inspiration from modern nationalist movements since the 19th century.⁴ The modern identification of these communities has increasingly taken on an ethnic character, despite the presence of numerous religious myths and motifs. Zionism is not unique in this regard; rather, it aligns in many ways with other forms of Semitic nationalist discourse in the region.

The primary reason for identity confusion in Israel lies in the fact that the religious myths nationalized by Zionism still hold different meanings for Jews who are not Israeli citizens or who prioritize their religious affiliation over national identity. This confusion is undeniably linked to the exceptional situation of the Palestinians, who were rendered both “identityless” and homeless with the establishment of Israel. Canaanism emerged from a conceptual debate surrounding this contradictory position. Developed by several Jewish intellectuals, artists, and thinkers in the 1930s and 1940s, Canaanism asserts that “Hebrew” as an ethnic identity is more ancient and, therefore, more binding than “Jew” as a religious identity. Canaanites argue that this Hebrew identity forms the foundation of the modern nation-state of Israel and reject the notion of equating the “Israeli” nation with the “Jewish” identity, seeing it as inherently contradictory. While a Hebrew –or Canaanite– nation may exist, it is inaccurate to describe this community as a Jewish nation, as its roots are grounded in religion rather than language and geography.

The fundamental premise of Canaanism posits that the foundation of a modern nation should be based on ethnic, linguistic, or geographical essence rather than religious affiliation, which is theoretically sound. However, Canaanism is closely linked to discussions within Zionism during the founding years of Israel and is associated with a faction known as Revisionist Zionism. Additionally, the rise of fascist ideologies and organizational forms in Europe during the 1930s had a clear impact on Canaanism. Despite this, Canaanism has not emerged as an effective or active nationalist alternative within Israeli politics; rather, it has remained a significant concept in the realms of art, aesthetics, and intellectual discourse. Many Jewish intellectuals associated with the group known as the “Young Hebrews,” led by the poet Yonatan Ratosh, became influential figures in Israel’s art scene in subsequent years. Canaanism served as an important form of nationalist discourse by bringing attention to the deconstruction of identity in Israel and the myths that underpin it, thus opening up discussions about alternative Israeli identities. Nevertheless, while the founding Zionist

the Bible and typically means “people.” For the terminological studies on this subject, see: Shlomo Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People* (New York: Verso, 2009), 28; Shaye J.D. Cohen, “Iudaios, Iudaeus, Judean, Jew”, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 69-106.

⁴ Ethno-religious identity refers to groups that do not constitute a nation, where it is nearly impossible to separate ethnic and religious affiliations due to their inherent integrity in pre-modern times. Examples of such groups in the pre-modern Middle East include Jews, Armenians, Maronites, Druzes, Nusayris, and other minority Christians (such as Assyrians and Nestorians). Although Armenian and Jewish identities now each have nation-states in the modern era, other groups continue to maintain their hybrid identities under minority status. This conceptualization is relatively uncommon in the literature on nationalism, particularly due to the dominant influence of constructivist theories. For a study that can form the basis for this conceptualization, see: Azar Gat, *Nations: The Long History and Deep Roots of Political Ethnicity and Nationalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 68-83.

movement critiqued the core historical theses of Canaanism and established an original oppositional stance, its political response was quite limited.

This study will explore Canaanism as an internal critique within Jewish thought concerning the paradoxical nature of national identity in Israel. First, it will examine the efforts of founding Zionist thought to create an ethnic and national form of belonging from a religious identity. In this context, the issue of historiography –considered a fundamental factor in the construction of national identity– will be addressed, and the official historical narrative canonized by the founding Zionist movement will be analyzed. The foundations of the nation-state identity in Israel, constructed through the myths of Jewish cultural tradition, will be discussed. Subsequently, the criticisms raised by Canaanites regarding this nation-building practice will be investigated, along with the characteristics of the official identity that Canaanism seeks to revise at a theoretical level. Finally, the study will assess whether Canaanism, which has largely lost its influence in Israeli intellectual life since the 1960s, can be re-evaluated in relation to post-Zionism today, particularly regarding its stance on the Palestinian issue.

1. Nationalizing Judaism and the *Haskalah*

Israeli national identity was constructed through the nationalization of Judaism. The myths, narratives, and symbols that Judaism, as an ethno-religious identity, has preserved in written tradition for centuries have been meticulously transformed into a “nationalized” character by Zionist intellectuals. In its simplest form, this transformation entails reinterpreting Judaism as a modern national identity. Therefore, David Ohana is correct in describing the national identity narrative envisioned by Zionism as “mythical modernism.”⁵

From the late 19th century to the mid-20th century, various ethnic and religious communities became subjects of intellectual pursuits aimed at constructing them as components of nation-states.⁶ The process of nationalization is founded on the principle of envisioning each nationalized community and its culture as equivalent to its modern Western counterparts in various respects. This process involves the standardization of language by removing local dialects, stabilizing history through the compilation of various myths, oral narratives, and epics, and promoting symbolic indicators in public life to transform a territory into a “homeland.” Such activities have often been interpreted in the literature as affirming the superiority of high culture over other subcultures⁷ or a “civilizing process.”⁸

⁵ David Ohana, *Modernism and Zionism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 2.

⁶ This process corresponds to what Eric Hobsbawm calls “the invention of tradition.” See: Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions”, *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm, Terence Ranger (London: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1-15.

⁷ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Publisher, 1983), 35-39.

⁸ Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations* (London: Wiley & Blackwell, 2000). The standardization of the Old Testament language and its dominance over Ladino and Yiddish are two key ways that Zionism interprets this process. Eliezer ben-Yehuda’s writings were crucial in this regard. For more specific details, see: Taha Kılınc, *Dil ve İşgal: Eliezer ben-Yehuda ve Modern İbranicenin Doğuşu* (İstanbul: Ketebe Yayınları, 2024). Economic equality is emphasized around the subject of “settlement,” and left-wing terminology is used in this discourse to actualize the Zionist founding thought’s goals regarding the creation of a “high culture” centered in the Yishuv. See: Cyrus Schayegh, *The Middle East and the Making of the Modern World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017), 76-79.

Zionism, as a modern form of nationalist discourse, is fundamentally rooted in one of the humanist Enlightenment movements prevalent in Europe during the second half of the 18th century. The “*Haskalah*,” or Jewish Enlightenment, which translates to “erudition” and gained prominence among Jewish intellectuals primarily in Eastern Europe in the 1770s, is a pivotal event in the development of modern Jewish identity.⁹ *Haskalah*, in which Jewish intellectuals such as Moses Mendelssohn (d. 1786), Naphtali Herz Wessely (d. 1805), and Isaac Baer Levinsohn (d. 1860) were involved, made a direct and decisive contribution to the issue of religious and ethnic interpretation of Judaism and was very influential in giving Jewish tradition a modern appearance. Inspired by the Enlightenment tradition that emphasized the triumph of reason across Europe, *Haskalah* thinkers vehemently opposed the isolation of the Jewish community in the diaspora. Prominent figures such as Mendelssohn, a leading theorist of the Jewish Enlightenment, underscored that no barriers were preventing Jews from integrating into the societies in which they lived.¹⁰ Interpreting Judaism as a purely religious form of belonging represented a crucial step toward the secularization of Jewish thought in modern rational times. Indeed, the concept of *Haskalah* ultimately foregrounded the “assimilation” of Jews in Europe, restricted the visibility of Jewish identity in public life, and encouraged a new interpretation of the Old Testament.¹¹

Like every modernist form of discourse, *Haskalah* formulated a new type of identity. It can be seen as a “phase A,” or “cultural awakening,” which nationalism theorists such as Miroslav Hroch and Eric Hobsbawm identified as essential for the realization of a nationalist movement.¹² The Jewish identity envisioned by *Haskalah* intellectuals represented a modern religious affiliation embedded with Enlightenment ideals, capable of integrating a rational-secular lifestyle (i.e., the national identity of the societies in which they lived) into its *habitus*.¹³ Additionally, the revision of Jewish history through a contemporary interpretation of texts within the religious canon brought the ancient continuity of Jewish identity to the forefront. This Enlightenment critique of the rigid introversion characteristic of traditional Jewish thought established a new understanding of subjectivity, encapsulated in the notion of “the individual on the street, the Jew at home,” for the first time on a theoretical level.¹⁴

From a direct perspective, Zionism emerged as a reaction to *Haskalah*. The rise of anti-Semitism across Europe in the mid-19th century demonstrated that the Enlightenment

⁹ For detailed information on *Haskalah*, the works of Samuel Feiner are very instructive. See especially: Samuel Feiner, “Towards a Historical Definition of *Haskalah*”, *New Perspectives on the Haskalah*, ed. Samuel Feiner, David Sorkin (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2004), 184-221.

¹⁰ Miri Freud-Kandel, “Modernist Movements”, *Modern Judaism: An Oxford Guide*, ed. Nicholas de Lange, Miri Freud-Kandel (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 83-90.

¹¹ Feiner, “Towards,” 185.

¹² Miroslav Hroch, *European Nations: Explaining Their Formations* (New York: Verso, 2015); Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nation since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 46-80.

¹³ On the foundations of modern Jewish identity based on the *Haskalah*, see: Samuel Feiner, *Haskalah and History: The Emergence of a Modern Jewish Historical Consciousness* (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2002), 317-341.

¹⁴ Eliezer Schweid, “The Political Philosophy of the National *Haskalah* Movement in Eastern Europe”, *A History of Modern Jewish Religious Philosophy*, v. II, tr. Leonard Levin (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 107-111.

could not solely produce positive outcomes.¹⁵ It also revealed that integration was not a viable solution for Jews in Central and Eastern Europe. Events such as the Dreyfus Affair and the pogroms in the Russian Empire prompted even the most liberal, Enlightenment-influenced Jewish intellectuals in Europe to seek alternatives.¹⁶ Zionism, which gained political momentum with the establishment of the World Zionist Organization in 1897, initiated the process of founding Israel by blending the secular nationalist discourse with the idea of a “return to the Holy Land.”

However, it is misleading to describe the *Haskalah* as merely an intellectual core against which early Zionists defined themselves. Like every cultural revival movement, *Haskalah* proposed to reinterpret a community’s way of life in a modern style. This meant that the cultural elements that gave color to the Jewish ethno-religious identity were handled in a secular-rational manner. Zionism, which built a modern national identity through Jewish religious identity, clearly adopted the modernist discourse of *Haskalah* in this regard. For example, Eliezer ben-Yehuda (d. 1922), the father of modern Hebrew, had been in *Haskalah* circles in his youth.¹⁷ His intellectual works, which revived Hebrew, which was divided into different dialects and stuck in the religious sphere, in a modern, standard form, were also within the nation-building practices of Zionism.

2. Official Israeli Historiography

Israeliness was primarily made possible by conceptualizing the historical narrative of being Israeli as the latest link in an ancient chain of continuity. The historical framework established by Zionist intellectuals shaped the fundamental motifs of Israeli national identity. As is typical in nation-building practices, the cultural elements that required codification –language, history, and geography– defined the unique fabric of this identity. However, in the case of Israel, history directly influenced the development of the official conception of identity.¹⁸ In other words, as illustrated by the example of Canaanism, alternative forms of nationalist discourse and identity constructions emerged specifically in response to critiques of this historical perspective.

The 19th century was a period which modern nations “discovered” or often “invented” their “ancient” origins.¹⁹ Although Jewish history had been a subject of interest for European theologians and historians since the Middle Ages –primarily within the framework of

¹⁵ For one of the most fundamental works in the literature on the relationship between the Enlightenment and racism, see: Leon Poliakov, *The Aryan Myth: A History of Racist and Nationalistic Ideas in Europe*, tr. Edmund Howard (Heinemann: Sussex University Press, 1974).

¹⁶ The Dreyfus Affair (1894–1906) was a political and judicial scandal in France, centered on the wrongful conviction of Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish French army officer, for treason. The case highlighted deep divisions within French society, including anti-semitism, and became a catalyst for the Zionist movement. The pogroms in the Russian Empire, particularly during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, were violent, state-tolerated attacks on Jewish communities.

¹⁷ Ron Kuzar, *Hebrew and Zionism: A Discourse Analytic Cultural Study* (New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2001), 45–47.

¹⁸ In the words of Gabriel Piterberg: “the authority of history replaced the authority of God” in Israel. See: Gabriel Piterberg, *The Returns of Zionism: Myths, Politics and Scholarship in Israel* (London: Verso, 2008), 96.

¹⁹ Hobsbawm, “Introduction”, 7–10; Daniel Woolf, “Of Nations, Nationalism and National Identity: Reflections on the Historiographical Organization of the Past”, *The Many Faces of Clío: Cross-Cultural Approaches to Historiography*, ed. Q. Edward Wang, Franz L. Fillafer (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), 73.

Biblical studies– it was largely treated as a part of purely religious concept.²⁰ Following the *Haskalah* and within the “national” climate of the 19th century, Jewish history began to be examined in a new light for the first time. The work of Jewish-German historian Isaak Markus Jost (d. 1860), titled *Geschichte der Israeliten seit den Zeiten der Makkabäer* (A History of the Israelites from the Times of the Maccabees to Our Time), published in nine volumes between 1820 and 1829, is notable as the first modern Jewish chronicle.²¹ As a strict adherent of the *Haskalah* rationalist tradition, Jost distanced himself from Talmudic sources. The choice to use the term “Israelite” in the title of his book, which he considered more authentic, rather than “Jewish” suggests that Jost did not possess a strong sense of national consciousness.²²

The early 19th century is often regarded as an early moment for the emergence of “national consciousness.” While Jost addressed ancient Jewish tradition (ethno-religious belonging) within the framework of a new intellectual style (*Haskalah*), he continued to view Judaism as a purely religious identity. Consequently, he cannot be included in the canon of nationalist historiography.²³ In contrast, *Geschichte der Juden* (History of the Jews), a study that written by another Jewish-German historian, Heinrich Graetz (d. 1891), serves as a more fitting starting point for this canon.²⁴ This first modern Jewish history, which was attributed global significance and authored by a Jew, represented a transition from the idea of assimilation to the Zionist movement (or proto-Zionism). Graetz’s interpretation of the Bible was secular, and he adopted a “Judeo-German” identity, which continued to form the basis of European Jewry. The primary motivation behind his work was to advocate for the acceptance of Jews as equal citizens in Europe. However, his emphasis on the theme of “return to Zion” positioned Graetz at a critical juncture in Zionist historiography, leading to his book being taught as a foundational text in Israeli schools.²⁵

Moses Hess’s (d. 1875) *Rom und Jerusalem* (Rome and Jerusalem), published in 1862, was the first book to introduce the concept of the “Jewish race” into literature, aligning with the dominant terminology of Europe at the time.²⁶ Ironically, Hess was a close friend of Karl Marx and a socialist. Although he was a staunch follower of Marx’s ideas, Hess perceived history as a “struggle of races” rather than merely a class struggle.²⁷ According to Hess, the primary reason Jews were viewed as “foreigners” by Europeans was their racial identity,

²⁰ Robert Irwin, *Dangerous Knowledge: Orientalism and its Discontents* (New York: Overlook Press, 2006), 82-109.

²¹ Michael Brenner, *The Prophets of the Past: Interpreters of Jewish History*, tr. Steven Rendall (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 13.

²² Sand, *The Invention*, 67.

²³ On Jost’s contribution to the consideration of Jewish national identity as a modern phenomenon, see: Michael A. Meyer, *The Origins of the Modern Jew: Jewish Identity and European Culture in Germany, 1749-1824* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1967), 170-171.

²⁴ Brenner, *Prophets*, 53-57; Michael A. Meyer, “The Emergence of the Jewish Historiography: Motives and Motifs”, *History and Theory* 27/4 (1988), 173-175.

²⁵ Brenner, *Prophets*, 50. Yoav Gelber, *Nation and History: Israeli Historiography between Zionism and Post-Zionism* (London: Valentine Mitchell, 2011), 100-109.

²⁶ Sand, *The Invention*, 78-79.

²⁷ In the mid-19th century, this approach was one of the most fundamental pillars of European intellectual life. Hess was certainly in intellectual contact with names that established the scientific legitimacy of the idea of race, such as writers Joseph Arthur de Gobineau, Ernest Renan and Max Meyer. On this subject, see: Jon Efron, *Defenders of the Race: Jewish Doctors and Race Science in Fin-de-Siècle Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

rather than their religion. He argued that the only solution for the Jews, as “a pure race that has managed to reproduce all its characteristic features” throughout history, was “returning to Zion.”²⁸ Thus, 35 years before the publication of *Der Judenstaat*, the foundational text of Zionism, Hess articulated a vision of national Jewish identity and underscored the Jewish presence in Palestine. Hess was also a close friend of Graetz. While both shared a secular approach to religious sources, it is evident that Hess represented a significant departure from the historical framework of *Haskalah*.²⁹

The Graetz tradition, while influential in shaping the founding Zionist idea, occupies a distinct position following the official establishment of Israel. This school, rooted in *Haskalah* and European rationalism, emerged as a scientific counterpoint to a more radical, religion-centered historiography by the mid-20th century. The Austrian-born Jewish historian and head of the first Jewish history chair in the United States, Salo Wittmayer Baron (d. 1989), represents the final major figure of this school. Baron aimed to present Jewish history through a narrative supported by archaeological evidence and other verifiable fields of expertise, dedicating his career to a scientific revision of the Bible-centered narrative.³⁰

The historical theses presented by Baron in his *magnum opus*, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, which offer “scientific” views that neither advocate for a return to Zion nor serve as the foundation for a national historiographical ideal, are criticized by the traditional Jerusalem-centered understanding of history. The rejection of Baron by the German-Jewish historian Yitzhak Baer (d. 1980), who headed the Department of History at the newly established Hebrew University of Jerusalem, gains significance in the context of the notion of a biologically homogeneous nation. In fact, the historical debate between Baron and Baer reflects the Anglo-Saxon-German opposition regarding the interpretation of the Jewish nation, particularly around the theme of “exile.”³¹ For Baer and his followers, exile enhances the sanctity and ethnic integrity of the Jewish faith, which became institutionalized while the Jews remained in the Holy Land. Conversely, Baron and his followers argued that exile had the opposite effect by institutionalizing the faith. In other words, while Baer accepted the fundamental argument of the German historical school from which he emerged—reading the nation through an ethnic and racial lens—Baron approached the issue from a more functionalist perspective.³²

²⁸ Ken Koltun-Fromm, *Moses Hess and Modern Jewish Identity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 16-18.

²⁹ On the other hand, it should be noted that for Hess, the primary element that ensured the inheritance of the Jewish race through generations was “religion.” Race was undoubtedly of primary importance for Hess in establishing Jewish national consciousness, but the role of religion in saving it from assimilation was undeniable. See: Sand, *The Invention*, 79.

³⁰ Robert Liberles, *Salo Wittmayer Baron: Architect of Jewish History* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 58.

³¹ The debate between Baer and Baron constitutes one of the most critical turning points in modern Jewish historiography. See: Isaac E. Barzilay, “Yishaq (Fritz) Baer and Shalom (Salo Wittmayer) Baron: Two Contemporary Interpreters of Jewish History”, *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 60/1 (1994): 7-69.

³² This explains to some extent the reception that Baer’s work received in Germany and continental Europe, even during the period of Nazism. See: Israel Jacob Yuval, “Yitzhak Baer and the Search for Authentic Judaism”, *The Jewish Past Revisited: Reflections on Modern Jewish Historians*, ed. D.N. Meyers, D.B. Ruderman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 77-87.

The Zion journal, founded in 1936 by Yitzhak Baer and another pioneer of Zionism, Ben-Zion Dinur (d. 1973), formed the backbone of official Jewish historiography. Dinur expanded his earlier work, *The History of Israel*, written in 1918, after joining the Department of History at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 1938, and republished it under the title *Israel in Its Land*. This book remains arguably the most definitive source of official Israeli historiography to this day.³³ Sand elucidates Dinur's dominant role by comparing him to Graetz, identifying him as the first modern Jewish historian.

If Graetz was responsible for the foundation and scaffolding of the retroactive construction of the Jewish nation, Dinur laid the bricks, hung the beams, and fitted the windows and doors.³⁴

3. Canaanite Option

The result was a set of principles that can be summarized by the “book-people-land” trinity.³⁵ While the intellectual foundations of this trinity were laid by Baer, Dinur, and Kaufmann, who established a field with blurred boundaries between history, mythology, and theology, its widespread adoption and attainment of *doxa* status can be attributed to David Ben-Gurion himself. The cultural policies pursued by Israel during its nation-building years necessitated naming Ben-Gurion as both the “founder of the nation” and the “founder of the state.” His efforts included the policy of giving Biblical names to newborns, changing old surnames to ancient Hebrew names, renaming settlements with names from the holy texts, and attempts to “prove” mythology and theology through intensive archaeological activities.³⁶

The newly established state of Israel found itself in a contradictory position; insisting on being recognized as a Jewish state belonging to all Jews worldwide while also struggling to define its “citizens” within its borders.³⁷ This identity issue gave rise to “Revisionist Zionism,” influenced by far-right movements in Europe during the 1930s and representing an opposition wing within Zionism.³⁸ The “neurotic” national character of Israel,³⁹ rooted in the belief that it is “surrounded by enemies,” alongside the social hierarchy that marginalized Palestinians and lower-class Jews, highlighted the paradoxical identity problem that permeated the establishment. These issues were systematically critiqued in the sharpest terms by a group of Jewish intellectuals who identified themselves as Young Hebrews.

³³ Uri Ram, “Zionist Historiography and the Invention of Modern Jewish Nationhood: The Case of Ben Zion Dinur”, *History and Memory* 7/1 (1995): 91-124.

³⁴ Sand, *The Invention*, 104.

³⁵ On the close relationship between national identity and geography in Israel, see: Chaim Gans, *A Political Theory for the Jewish People* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 86-92.

³⁶ Alan Levenson, “David Ben-Gurion, the Bible and the Case for Jewish Studies and Israel Studies”, *Jewish Studies and Israel Studies in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Carsten Schapkow, Klaus Hödl (London: Lexington Books, 2019), 15-31; Keren, *Ben-Gurion*, 100-101.

³⁷ Sand, *The Invention*, 21.

³⁸ Revisionist Zionism, founded by Ze'ev Jabotinsky in the 1920s, advocated for the establishment of a Jewish state on both banks of the Jordan River. Emphasizing military strength, territorial maximalism, and political sovereignty, it opposed the more moderate policies of mainstream Zionism and significantly influenced the development of right-wing politics in Israel. On the revisionist Zionism, see: Yaacov Shavit, *Jabotinsky and the Revisionist Movement, 1925-1948* (New York: Franck Cass, 2005).

³⁹ For the roots of this neurosis or anxiety, which can be traced back to the early written texts at the very foundation of Jewish tradition, see Shai Ginsburg, *Rhetoric and Nation: The Formation of Hebrew National Culture, 1880-1990* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2014), 153-195.

The group known as the Canaanites, or Young Hebrews, consisted of a small but intellectually influential circle. Led by poet Yonatan Ratosh⁴⁰ (d. 1981) and his brother, linguist Uzzi Ornan (d. 2022), the organization was founded by archaeologist Adia Gur Huron (d. 1972), sculptor Yitzhak Danziger (d. 1977), and writers Amos Kenan (d. 2009) and Benjamin Tammuz (d. 1989). Operating officially under the name “Council for the Coalition of Hebrew Youth,” the group emerged as a systematic movement that primarily addressed cultural issues while sometimes offering sharp critiques of the foundational identity imagined by Zionism. Additionally, Canaanism found significant expression in paramilitary organizations such as Irgun and Lehi in the early 1940s, when the movement was at its peak popularity, revealing its connections to the far right and revisionist Zionism.⁴¹

The fundamental premise of Canaanism, posited that “Judaism” is a universal religion, allowing individuals from any nation to embrace it. However, the national community that constitutes Israel is defined as “Hebrew.”⁴² This distinction between “Hebrew” and “Jew” serves as a critique of the paradox inherent in the logic underpinning Israel’s foundation.⁴³ While the nationalization of “Jew” as an ethno-religious identity forms the core of the founding Zionist thought, it simultaneously reveals the theological aspect of the “Israeli nation” as a secular identity. Consequently, this perspective promotes a reinterpretation of nationalism. The Canaanists’ primary critique of Zionism was its reliance on an ethnic interpretation of nationalism, as they emphasized a geographical –or “territorial,”⁴⁴ as commonly referred to in nationalism literature– approach. For Canaanists, this geography encompasses “the land of Kedem” or “the land of Canaan.”⁴⁵ Although these terms are also utilized by Zionists, “Israel” does not represent an ideal spatial concept for Canaanists. Instead, they view the Hebrews’ homeland, or “the land of Kedem,” as including not only Israel but also a broader region comprising present-day Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq – essentially the “Fertile Crescent.”

According to Canaanists, the extensive Semitic geography inhabited by Hebrew speakers predated the emergence of Judaism as a religion. For the inhabitants of the Fertile Crescent, including present-day Israel, the origins of their national identity was rooted in Hebrewness rather than Jewness. This territorial discourse theoretically facilitated a sense of solidarity

⁴⁰ Born in Warsaw in 1908, Ratosh’s real name was Uriel Shelach. He was raised in an educational environment, as both of his parents were teachers in Jewish educational institutions. Ratosh was significantly influenced by the Eastern European *Haskalah* tradition, which emphasized Enlightenment and a focus on the Hebrew language and culture. His familial background nurtured a strong interest in linguistics and Hebrew scholarship, with his siblings Rin and Ornan also becoming linguists and Hebrew scholars. Rin moved to the United States in the 1950s, distancing himself from Canaanism and political issues, while Ornan emerged as one of the founding figures of the Canaanist movement alongside Ratosh. For more detailed biographical information about Ratosh, you can see: Lutz Fiedler, *Matzpen: A History of Israeli Dissidence*, tr. Jake Schneider (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), 150-154; James S. Diamond, *Homeland or Holy Land? The ‘Canaanite’ Critique of Israel* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), chapter 3.

⁴¹ Kuzar, *Hebrew*, 197.

⁴² Klaus Hofmann, “Canaanism”, *Middle Eastern Studies* 47/2 (2011), 274.

⁴³ See Kuzar, *Hebrew*, 202: “From a Canaanite point of view, there were no Jews in most of antiquity, only Hebrews, and when Jews appeared towards the end of this era, they were not a national but a religious entity.”

⁴⁴ On the two types of nationalism as “ethnic” and “territorial” variations, see. Anthony D. Smith, “Ethnic and Territorial Nationalism”, *Encyclopedia of Nationalism*, ed. Athena Leoussi (London: Transaction Publishers, 2001), 62-64.

⁴⁵ Fiedler, *Matzpen*, 153; Ohana, *Modernism*, 95.

with other residents of the Fertile Crescent, such as Bedouins, Christians, Druze, and Levantines.⁴⁶ This distinction represented one of the fundamental differences between Canaanism and Zionism. However, the core conflict between the Zionist and Canaanist historical narratives lies in the interpretation of Zionism's discourse of "return." Canaanists contend that the sanctification of the "return to Zion" following the Egyptian and Babylonian Exiles is not an ethnic or national event, but rather a purely religious concept. From this perspective, Jewishness is viewed as merely a facet of Hebrewness.

This fundamental theoretical divide also reflects a profound opposition between Zionists and Canaanites regarding the issue of their modern identities. The Jewish historical canon, emerging from Graetz onward, reinterpreted the myths surrounding Israeli identity in a national context, establishing them as official discourse. For Zionists, the Jews of the pre-Israeli region, referred to as the "old *yishuv*," were viewed as an ethnic and religious community. With the introduction of the idea of nationhood from Europe through the first *aliyah*, the "new *yishuv*" gradually adopted a national tone.⁴⁷ In other words, the newly arrived immigrants brought the concept of nationalism to the region, transforming the old religious community structure into a modern Israeli nation.

In contrast, Canaanites viewed the old *yishuv* as a purely religious community that corresponded to a pre-modern, backward category. However, unlike the Zionists, Canaanites did not accept that this old *yishuv* contained a national or ethnic "essence." This perspective suggested a significant divide between the modern era and the preceding one, directly challenging the fundamental arguments of Zionist historiography. The Zionist narrative posited an ethnic continuity from ancient times to the modern period, asserting that this identity had never entirely vanished, even if it had weakened at times. While both Canaanites and Zionists were revivalists, the Canaanites contended that the old *yishuv* had not transformed into a national community aligned with the secular nationalist ideals brought by European immigrants. Instead, they argued that the real awakening occurred in the second half of the 19th century through intellectuals within the old *yishuv*. As Kuzar notes, "Canaanite discourse is based on local renaissance, absorbing the waves of immigrants into its emergent culture."⁴⁸

Why is this subtle nuance important? First and foremost, it emphasizes the geographical aspect of national identity, specifically territorial continuity, which is central to Canaanism. The traditions maintained by the inhabitants of the old *yishuv* were crucial for the awakening of the ancient Hebrew community. These individuals had lived in the "land of Kedem" for centuries, allowing them to preserve their way of life and cultural practices. The discovery of Ugaritic inscriptions at Ras Shamra in 1929 and subsequent studies of the language in the 1930s lent temporary support to the scientific legitimacy of Canaanite theses. Ugaritic shared numerous words and expressions with Hebrew, and the suggestion that it was a dialect of Hebrew aligned with the idea that the entire Fertile Crescent was part of the Hebrew cultural sphere.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Hofmann, "Canaanism", 274.

⁴⁷ Amotz Giladi, "Yonatan Ratosh's 'Cultural Entrepreneurship' and the Invention of 'Hebrew' Nationalism", *Historical Reflections* 45/3 (2019), 82.

⁴⁸ Kuzar, *Hebrew*, 212.

⁴⁹ Shai Feraro, "The Return of Baal to the Holy Land: Canaanite Reconstructionism among Contemporary Israeli Pagans", *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 20/2 (2016), 62.

For the Canaanites, archaeology held special significance as an endeavor that would concretize and vitalize identity, rather than merely serving as a quest for political legitimacy. Historiography and archaeology aimed to embed the perception of identity cultivated through education and museums into collective memory.⁵⁰ However, this embedding was inherently limited. Every form of nationalist discourse requires practices that render the mythical character of its imagined identity and the continuity extending back to prehistory concrete, and in a sense, “real” within public life. Thus, while the official cultural policies of the government are vital, their natural integration into social life presents a problematic challenge. A symbol of Canaanism’s opposition to the official Israeli identity was a statue that highlighting the inclusive Semitic character of Hebrew identity beyond Judaism.

Yitzhak Danziger’s statue of “Nimrod,” created in 1939, quickly became a symbol of Canaanism. Constructed from Nubian sandstone sourced from Petra, the statue emphasized the trans-Israeli Semitic character of Hebrew identity. As a mythological figure depicted in the Tanakh as a powerful and cruel king opposing Jehovah, Nimrod embodied a fundamental opposition to the core logic of Zionism.⁵¹ Danziger portrayed this legendary hunter-king, who was not particularly favored by the Jews, as proud, naked (and uncircumcised), with a bow slung over his shoulder. When the statue was unveiled in 1944, it resonated deeply with the Israeli public. However, it also drew sharp criticism from religious circles, as well as from The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and various Zionist factions.⁵²

For the Canaanites, the figure of Nimrod represented one of the most concrete symbolizations of the new Hebrew identity. He served as a perfect link, synthesizing Israel’s modern identity with its roots in both Mesopotamia and the Mediterranean.⁵³ As Max Weber demonstrated, Nimrod epitomized the archetype of the Mesopotamian monarch.⁵⁴ The statue became an aesthetic signifier that invigorated Hebrew identity within poetic

⁵⁰ Gelber, *Nation*, 217-245. The “knowledge of origins” that was imparted in Jewish educational institutions during the Mandate Palestine can be seen as a contemporary interpretation of Semitic consciousness, often presented with a veneer of Western-style scientific racism. While this approach undeniably reinforced the paradoxical identity vision of Zionism, it also sparked interest among the younger generation in alternative movements, such as Canaanism. See: Yoni Furas, “We the Semites: Reading Ancient History in Mandate Palestine”, *Contemporary Levant* 5/1 (2020), 41.

⁵¹ In the biblical narrative, Nimrod is described as the grandson of Ham, one of Noah’s sons, and the son of Cush. In the Book of Genesis, he is characterized as “a mighty man on earth” and “a mighty hunter before the Lord.” Biblical commentators often portray Nimrod as a complex, ominous figure –an evil ruler who cast Abraham into the fire and encouraged people to rebel against God. Although Nimrod’s name does not appear in the Quran, Islamic commentators generally identify him as the individual mentioned in Surah Al-Baqarah, who became arrogant and disputed with Abraham after God bestowed upon him wealth and power. See: Cengiz Batuk, “Nemrud,” *TDV Encyclopedia of Islam* (Ankara: TDV Publishing, 2006), 32/555-556.

⁵² Ohana, *Modernism*, 122-179.

⁵³ In Israeli politics, there exists a perspective that embraces a more cosmopolitan understanding of identity, focused on the Mediterranean region. This concept of Mediterraneanism fosters a “geo-cultural” representation that facilitates the construction of Israeli identity in a “Western” framework. It also emphasizes the potential for cultural collaboration with other nations that share Levantine traditions, including Lebanon, Egypt, and Turkey. For further exploration of this topic, see: Yaacov Shavit, “The Mediterranean World and ‘Mediterraneanism’: The Origins, Meaning and Application of a Geo-Cultural Notion in Israel”, *Mediterranean Historical Review* 3/2 (1988), 96-117.

⁵⁴ Max Weber, *The Agrarian Sociology of Ancient Civilizations*, R. I. Frank (London: Verso, 1998), 83-105.

imagination, integrating a mythical model into daily life and thereby embodying the Canaanite worldview.

4. Post-Zionism Debates or Canaanism on the Palestine

The post-Zionism debates in Israeli politics have primarily centered around the assertion that Zionism completed its mission with the establishment of Israel, necessitating an alternative set of policies on various issues, particularly the Palestinian issue.⁵⁵ Changes in Israeli society and the economy during the 1980s and 1990s significantly contributed to this discourse, alongside shifts in the global and regional context. The end of the Cold War and the events of September 11 ushered in a wave of neo-liberal norms, creating an environment where the Israeli economy gained greater access to the open market, leading to a more liberal orientation among new generations of the society.⁵⁶ This approach often carries a pejorative connotation, contrasting left-Zionists with extreme nationalists and radical right Zionists in Israel.⁵⁷ It does not reject the achievements of Zionism but rather embraces Israel's Jewish character and its pioneering role in supporting world Jewry, while also emphasizing its responsibilities toward its own citizens.

Although Canaanism lost its character as an intellectual movement with political outcomes from the late 1960s onwards, it persisted as an alternative avenue, particularly in matters of aesthetics and culture. Its historiographical critique of mainstream Zionism and its inclination to distinguish diaspora Judaism from Israeliness fostered a natural affinity between Canaanism and post-Zionism. Uri Avnery (d. 2018), regarded as one of the "spiritual fathers" of post-Zionism,⁵⁸ exemplifies this connection with his provocative book *Israel without Zionists*, published in 1968. Having met Ratosh in his youth, Avnery noted that although they "shared the same views on certain ideological issues," he ultimately severed ties with Ratosh and Canaanism due to fundamental disagreements.⁵⁹

Indeed, the distinction between post-Zionism and Canaanism is as clear as Avnery emphasizes. Although both ideological positions envision Israeli national identity in ways that diverge significantly from mainstream Zionism, the "primordial" continuity characterized by geographical ties in Canaanism stands in stark contrast to the constitutional-liberal citizenship concepts emphasized by post-Zionism.⁶⁰ The primary factor that aligns Canaanism more closely with the left on the political spectrum, or suggests

⁵⁵ Israeli theorist Uri Ram's book, published in 1993, is at the forefront of studies that brought the conceptualization of "post-Zionism" to the literature. See: Uri Ram, *Israeli Nationalism: Social Conflicts and the Politics of Knowledge* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 112.

⁵⁶ Ilan Pappé, "The Square Circle: The Struggle for Survival of Traditional Zionism", *The Challenge of Post-Zionism*, ed. Ephraim Nimni (London: Zed Books, 2003), 53-61.

⁵⁷ This ultranationalistic branch of the Israeli right is often referred to as neo-Zionism. The term neo-Zionism has frequently been employed to describe the reactionary stance adopted by mainstream Zionism in response to the discussions surrounding post-Zionism. On this subject, see: Ram, *Israeli Nationalism*, 123-124.

⁵⁸ Ram, *Israeli Nationalism*, 113.

⁵⁹ Avnery describes Canaanism as "romantic, anachronistic, and divorced from reality." See Uri Avnery, "Benjamin's Inn: A tribute to artist, writer, and editor Benjamin Tammuz, the 'Canaanite,' on the occasion of the publication of a new edition of his writings in Hebrew", *Haaretz*, 27 December 2007.

⁶⁰ Hofmann, "Canaanism", 286. Some researchers, such as Diamond and Shavit, have a different view on this issue. Diamond claims that Ratosh was the first "post-Zionist intellectual." See: Diamond, *Homeland*, 5; Yaacov Shavit, *The New Hebrew Nation: A Study on Israeli Heresy and Fantasy* (New York: Routledge, 1987), 140-143.

a connection to leftist or post-Zionist ideologies, is the movement's "alternative" stance regarding Palestine and Arabs in general.

When considering that the Canaanists envisioned a new modern Hebrew identity centered on Palestinian Judaism, it becomes evident that their stance on the Palestinian issue differs significantly from that of mainstream Zionism. In fact, their perspective on other Semitic peoples of the "land of Canaan" reflects this distinction. For Canaanism, the Arab people of the Fertile Crescent are often viewed as a "medievalistic" or "backward" community.⁶¹ Yet, this characterization also applies to the old *yishuv*, which Canaanism idealized and regarded as foundational to the modern Hebrew nation. An examination of the writings of figures associated with revisionist Zionism, particularly during the mandate period, reveals that Canaanists were generally more inclusive and open-minded in their relations with non-Jewish peoples of the Middle East. Ratosh, who authored the movement's manifesto in 1943, stated:

And the backward population in our land, this assemblage of communities and families and contradictions, whose seeming unity is the work of the British, for they are those who have been organizing them against us... this population, which nobody knows how much Hebrew blood flows through its veins... we the Hebrews, released from the barriers of religiousness and communality, will be able to accept anyone among them who would wish to assimilate... and become one of us, with all the duties and the rights.⁶²

In the eyes of the Canaanites, Palestinian Arabs were a community with ancient Hebrew origins that had distanced themselves from their "original" national identity due to manipulative British actions. For Ratosh, Palestinians were viewed as Hebrews who had converted to Islam at a certain point in history, leading to the conclusion that there was no theoretical difference between a Jew-Hebrew and a Muslim-Hebrew.⁶³ The Arabs, recognizing this reality, opposed the colonialist policies in the land of Kedem and embraced the essence of their identity, rooted in their "Hebrew" origins. Thus, the Canaanites regarded them as a kindred Semitic community open to cooperation.⁶⁴

Conclusion

Canaanism should fundamentally be understood as a call for the secularization of Israeli society and politics. The deep paradox inherent in Zionism's founding identity gave rise to troubling dissent even during the mandate period. The Canaanism movement emerged from the influence of some young individuals within the revisionist Zionist school, led by Jabotinsky. Rather than merely rejecting the identity project constructed by Zionism, this group asserted that their national identity was not Jewish but Hebrew. They argued that Hebrews, as the first inhabitants of the ancient land of Kedem, existed even before Judaism emerged as a religion. In essence, the Semitic peoples of the Middle East were Hebrew before they became Jews or Muslims. The Young Hebrews institutionalized this identity ideal as a form of nationalist discourse that encompassed the entire Fertile Crescent, extending beyond

⁶¹ Roman Vater, "Beyond bi-nationalism? The Young Hebrews versus the 'Palestinian Issue'", *Journal of Political Ideologies* 21/1 (2016), 47.

⁶² Yonatan Ratosh, "Masa haptikha", 198 akt. Vater, "Beyond bi-nationalism?", 48.

⁶³ Hofmann, "Canaanism", 274.

⁶⁴ Kuzar, *Hebrew*, 219.

the borders of the Mandate Palestine and, after 1948, the nation-state of Israel. Contrary to common perceptions, Canaanite nationalism did not operate within a racist framework; rather, it was a type of nationalism rooted in geographical determinism, a prevalent concept in the interwar Middle East that could be termed territorial nationalism. For the Canaanites, the foundation of the modern Hebrew nation was not based on ethnic or racial continuity but on a tradition of spontaneous coexistence among peoples who had shared the same geography for centuries.

The Canaanites represented a significant element of an alternative nationalism with an oppositional character in early Israeli political life. Their discourse on the Palestinian issue during the Nasser era, when Pan-Arabism reached its zenith, stood in stark contrast to official Zionist rhetoric. Saying that, the Canaanites opposed not only Zionism and Western colonialism but also Pan-Arabism. However, neither this ideal of identity nor their call for cooperation among Arabic-speaking peoples, nor their aspiration for Semitic political and cultural unity, resonated within Israel or across the Fertile Crescent. Over time, Canaanism emerged as an early reference point in discussions of post-Zionism.

One possible reason for the failure of Canaanism could be despite its compelling alternative appearance, was disconnected from the contemporary realities of the region. Following World War I, other territorial nationalisms that mirrored the foundational principles of Canaanite ideology also faltered. Egyptian Pharaohists, Lebanese Phoenicians, Syrian nationalist Antun Saadeh and supporters of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP), and even Anatolianists in Turkey ultimately succumbed to the rise of ethnic nationalisms, which rendered geography insufficient as the sole determinant of national identity. Additionally, another contributing factor to the decline of Canaanism is the historical fact that Hebrew was never a language spoken throughout, or even predominantly in, the Fertile Crescent. This reality undermines one of the fundamental tenets of the Canaanite doctrine. Just as it is impossible to categorize all communities in Europe under a single label of “European nation” based solely on their shared Indo-European language family, the existence of a modern Hebrew nation similarly presents significant challenges.

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Zionism and Academic Hegemony: The Intersection of Power, Knowledge, and Suppression in the United States Universities

► Araştırma makalesi / Research article

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Abstract

This paper critically explores the impact of Zionism on academic freedom and knowledge production in U.S. universities. It emphasizes how political lobbying, financial influence, and allegations of antisemitism are strategically employed to establish a cultural hegemony that determines what discourse is acceptable. Based on Michel Foucault's theory of power-knowledge, which posits that knowledge and power are intimately linked and shape one another, and Antonio Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony, which explains how dominant groups maintain power through ideological means, this study examines how Zionist organizations influence higher education frameworks, research priorities, and public discourse. This manipulation often serves to marginalize, silence, or delegitimize critical perspectives that oppose or challenge Israeli policies and actions, especially those related to the occupation of Palestinian territories and human rights violations. This paper analyzes certain instances highlighting these dynamics, such as the rescinded job offer to Steven Salaita at the University of Illinois following his criticism of Israel's genocide in Gaza on social media. This case, among others, underscores how Zionist lobbying and donor pressures can directly affect university governance, academic appointments, and freedom of expression within academic settings. Additional examples include the suppression of pro-Palestinian viewpoints and the punishment of students and faculty who advocate for Palestinian rights at various prominent U.S. institutions, which further demonstrate the broader, systematic efforts to control academic discourse. By examining these cases, the study reveals that Zionism's influence is not limited to isolated cases but creates a widespread atmosphere where academic freedom is restricted. Universities meant to be pillars of free thought and critical inquiry, increasingly become arenas where dissent is suppressed and ideological conformity is imposed. This paper highlights the need for a deeper understanding of the mechanisms through which Zionism shapes the intellectual landscape in the U.S., reinforcing power structures that limit open debate and critical scholarship.

Keywords: Zionism, Academic freedom, Cultural hegemony, Power-Knowledge, USA universities.

Siyonizm ve Akademik Hegemonya: Güç, Bilgi ve Baskının ABD Üniversitelerindeki Kesişimi

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Öz

Bu makale, Siyonizm'in ABD üniversitelerindeki akademik özgürlük ve bilgi üretimi üzerindeki etkilerini eleştirel bir bakış açısıyla incelemektedir. Çalışma, siyasi lobcilik, finansal güç kullanımı ve antisemitizm suçlamalarının, kabul edilebilir söylemi belirleyen bir kültürel hegemonya oluşturmak için stratejik olarak nasıl kullanıldığını vurgulamaktadır. Michel Foucault'nun bilgi-iktidar teorisine—bilgi ve iktidarın birbirini karşılıklı olarak şekillendirdiği anlayışına—ve Antonio Gramsci'nin kültürel hegemonya kavramına—egemen grupların iktidarlarını ideolojik araçlarla nasıl koruduğunu açıklayan teorisine—dayanan bu makale, Siyonist organizasyonların yükseköğretim çerçevelerini, araştırma önceliklerini ve kamusal söylemi nasıl etkilediğini analiz etmektedir. Bu etkiler, genellikle Filistin topraklarının işgali ve insan hakları ihalleriyle ilgili İsrail politikalarına ve eylemlerine karşı çıkan veya bunları eleştiren perspektiflerin marjinalize edilmesi, susturulması veya gayrimüsrü ilan edilmesi şeklinde kendini göstermektedir. Bu çalışma, zikredilen dinamikleri somut örneklerle inlemektedir. Örneğin, Steven Salaita'nın İsrail'in Gazze'deki soykırımını sosyal medyada eleştirmesi sonrasında Illinois Üniversitesi'nde kendisine yapılan iş teklifinin geri çekilmesi, Siyonist lobiciliğin ve bağımsız baskıların üniversite yönetimlerini, akademik atamaları ve akademik ortamlardaki ifade özgürlüğünü doğrudan nasıl etkileyebileceğini göstermektedir. Ayrıca, ABD'deki çeşitli önde gelen üniversitelerde, Filistin haklarını savunan öğrenci ve akademisyenlerin susturulması ve cezalandırılması gibi örnekler, akademik söylemi kontrol altına almaya yönelik daha geniş ve sistematik çabaları gözler önüne sermektedir. Bu vakaları inceleyen makale, Siyonizm'in etkisinin yalnızca münferit olaylarla sınırlı kalmadığını, aksine akademik özgürlüğün kısıtlandığı yaygın bir atmosfer yarattığını ortaya koymaktadır. Özgür düşüncenin ve eleştirel sorgulamanın merkezleri olması gereken üniversiteler, giderek muhalefetin bastırıldığı ve ideolojik uyumun dayatıldığı mekânlara dönüşmektedir. Bu çalışma, Siyonizm'in ABD'deki entelektüel ortamı şekillendiren mekanizmalarının daha derin bir şekilde anlaşılmasına ve açık tartışma ile eleştirel akademik çalışmaların kısıtlayan güç yapılarının nasıl pekiştirildiğine dair bir farkındalık oluşturmaya amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Siyonizm, Akademik özgürlük, Kültürel hegemonya, Bilgi-İktidar ilişkisi, ABD üniversiteleri.

Introduction

The Israeli war crimes in Gaza since October 7 have significantly impacted not only the Israel-Palestine conflict but also the broader Middle Eastern and global political landscape. Israel's multifaceted genocide in Israel has deliberately targeted civilians, bombed UN schools and facilities, and occupied hospitals, creating an emerging concept in academic literature referred to as "war on hospitals".¹ International and human rights organizations report that Israel intentionally violates the laws of war and effectively rewrites them² to justify its actions.³ These articles illustrate Israel's approach to international law, particularly war law. In this sense, Israel seeks exceptions to established international norms in a similar way to the United States, reinterpreting these laws to justify military invasions that would otherwise be considered illegal under current international standards. In other words, this suggests a deliberate strategy to reshape international law according to national security interests, thus challenging its universality and consistency. Like American practices, Israel's exceptionalism underscores a broader trend where powerful states reshape global laws to meet their interests.

It has been argued that Israel is deliberately committing genocide in its actions. This has triggered a global uprising against it, dubbed a "global intifada" in Palestinian political terminology.⁴ The Israeli genocidal war on Gaza has revitalized the Palestinian national cause, bringing it back to international attention. As a result, the Israeli-Palestine conflict has re-emerged as a central topic of international discourse. Additionally, civil society, non-governmental organizations, and universities have begun to speak out against Israel's genocidal war on Gaza despite Western political hegemony's unconditional support for Israel.

Several universities and educational institutions played an important role in shaping the global awareness of Israel's genocide in Gaza. There was widespread criticism of Israel's genocide and war crimes at leading universities in the United States, such as Columbia and Harvard. This reaction resulted in creating a powerful environment of resistance within Western universities against Israeli genocide, driven by students and civil society.⁵ A new trend of criticism against Zionism has been evident through university encampments in the United States. The encampments for Palestinians on U.S. college campuses, sparked by President Biden's firm support for Israel, are creating significant political ramifications. Dunne says these protests reflect growing discontent among younger voters and civil rights activists, who view Biden's stance as neglecting Palestinian human rights. Dunne further argues that this process could result in an "American Intifada", potentially altering the

¹ Alessandra Bajec, "Israel's war on hospitals in Gaza", *The New Arab*, 21 November 2023, <https://www.newarab.com/analysis/israels-war-hospitals-gaza>, (Accessed Date 22 May 2024).

² Neve Gordon, "Israel seeks to rewrite the laws of war", *Aljazeera* (15 July 2024), <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2024/7/15/israel-seeks-to-rewrite-the-laws-of-war>, (Accessed Date 09 August 2024).

³ Leonard Rubenstein, "Israel's Rewriting of the Law of War" (21 December 2023), <https://www.justsecurity.org/90789/israels-rewriting-of-the-law-of-war/>, (Accessed Date 07 July 2024).

⁴ Hanna Alshaikh, "The US Academy and the Destruction of Gaza's Education System", *Arab Center Washington DC* (03 July 2024), <https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/the-us-academy-and-the-destruction-of-gazas-education-system/>, (Accessed Date 10 July 2024).

⁵ Charles Dunne, "Gaza, Biden, and an American Intifada", *Arab Center Washington DC* (27 March 2024), <https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/gaza-biden-and-an-american-intifada/>, (Accessed Date 30 June 2024).

political landscape in the U.S. He also emphasizes that this unrest could influence upcoming elections, as the President risks turning away a vital voter base crucial for his re-election. The election results demonstrate the significant influence of pro-Palestinian activism in American politics. Notably, the shift of young, pro-Palestinian voters toward third-party candidates played a decisive role in shaping the outcome. Statistical data reveals that this trend may have directly contributed to Biden's loss, emphasizing the critical impact of alienating a vital voter base essential for Democratic candidates. In Michigan, for instance, Arab American voters overwhelmingly supported third-party candidates, leading to a noticeable decline in Democratic support.⁶ This shift underlines the importance of addressing foreign policy concerns to maintain the loyalty of key voter demographics.⁷ Moreover, considering the extent of these encampments, it is evident that Israel has lost support in the West and has created a generation of Jewish Americans generation that opposes Zionism.

Israel's actions in Gaza have caused a strong backlash from university students, but university administrations and higher education establishments have aligned themselves with Israel. This alignment has manifested itself in aggressive practices, illegal actions, detentions, and violent interventions against protesting students and supporting academics. By deploying police forces, administrations have brutally pressured and suppressed students and academicians.⁸ Furthermore, the U.S. academy has significantly failed Gaza by not adequately addressing or intervening in the destruction of its education system by Israeli forces. According to Alsaikh⁹, American universities have largely remained silent or have engaged in insufficient condemnation of Israel's genocidal war targeting Gaza's educational infrastructure. This passive attitude has not only allowed the continued suffering of Palestinian students and educators but has also resulted in a lack of accountability for human rights violations. US academics' indifference reveals a broader failure to uphold educational and humanitarian values internationally.

Mearsheimer, Walt¹⁰ and Pappé¹¹ point out that this scenario illustrates the profound influence of Israel's lobbying power over Western institutions, particularly those in the United States. Zionism has significantly undermined free thought within the US' prestigious universities, paralleling Australia.¹² A significant part of Zionism's influence in the US is the co-opting of the educational sector, resulting in a change in academic and scientific production. Consequently, academic institutions in the U.S. are experiencing an erosion of independent thinking due to Zionist pressures and ideological influences such as Zionism, as observed in Australia. It illustrates the difficulty of maintaining academic freedom when faced with powerful political and ideological forces.

⁶ Abdelhalim Abdelrahman, "Why Michigan's Arab Americans Voted for Trump" (13 November 2024).

⁷ Charles Dunne, "Gaza, Biden, and an American Intifada" (27 March 2024).

⁸ Alice Speri, "'A police state': US universities impose rules to avoid repeat of Gaza protests", *The Guardian* (17 August 2024), <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/article/2024/aug/17/campus-protest-rules> (Accessed date 21 September 2024).

⁹ Alshaikh, "The US Academy and the Destruction of Gaza's Education System".

¹⁰ John J. Mearsheimer, Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 112-128.

¹¹ Ilan Pappé, *Lobbying for Zionism on Both Sides of the Atlantic* (London, the UK: Oneworld Publications, 2024), 251-315.

¹² Jumana Bayeh and Nick Riemer, "Palestine Solidarity and Zionist Backlash in Australian Universities", *Middle East Critique*, 4.

Given all these considerations, this study contends that Zionism influences academic freedom and production at U.S. universities. By employing case studies as a method, the paper demonstrates the pressures and systematic attacks on academics and students who criticize the Israeli genocide in Gaza. It begins by critically reviewing the literature about academic production and power relations since many suggest that academic production is not independent. The study then combines Foucault's theory of knowledge and power with Gramsci's concept of hegemony to provide a theoretical and conceptual framework. This framework argues that Zionist-influenced Western hegemony shapes scientific publications. Finally, it examines the U.S.' relationship with Zionism and Israel, highlighting the post-October 7 restrictions on academic freedoms in American universities.

1. Literature Review: The Interplay of Education, Politics, and Power

Several studies have examined the relationship between education, politics, and economics, concluding that politics and economics often influence educational systems and academic productions. In addition, it has been argued that science is not independent of foreign influences, and scientific publications do not always offer concrete solutions to contemporary problems. Certain social sciences disciplines, such as political science and international relations, are becoming increasingly irrelevant to international crises. It can be argued that concentrating only on academic studies, producing scholarly publications, and teaching theories without practical applications continues to serve those shaping the current political science and international relations crises. The failure of this approach not only preserves the existing power structures and systemic injustices that cause these crises, but it also fails to address pressing global issues. Because of neglecting concrete problem-solving and meaningful actions, academia becomes complicit in maintaining the status quo rather than fostering meaningful change, forcing it to call for a radical shift toward practices that confront and dismantle systemic injustices and harms so that universities can become relevant to global crises.

1.1. The Influence of Power on Historical Narratives

History writing or academic presentation is often far from being purely scientific and independent of politics. Jacob Burckhardt emphasizes how political agendas shaped historical narratives by analyzing the Medici family in *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*. During the Renaissance, Burckhardt argues, the Medici used art, culture, and history to legitimize their authority, exemplifying how historiography was intertwined with politics.¹³ Similarly, Gabriel Piterberg, in his examination of Sultan Osman II's deposition and assassination in 1622, places historiography as a subject. He offers a multi-layered perspective on the state concept through different and competing representations of events. Utilizing postmodern narrative theories, Piterberg emphasizes that historiography's contradictory and political nature is an undeniable part of Ottoman history. He explores the linguistic differences in archives where "lived history" and "written history" intertwine,

¹³ Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (London, England; New York, N.Y., USA: Penguin Books, 1990), 10–20.

seeking the methods and agendas behind them. Therefore, it can be argued that the influence of politics and power on scholarship practice is significant within the science of history.¹⁴ Michel-Rolph Trouillot¹⁵ examined how power dynamics shaped history writing, making, and recording. Trouillot argues that those who hold power often shape historical narratives to serve their interests, thereby silencing alternative perspectives and voices. He demonstrates this through various historical examples, such as the Haitian Revolution, where the mainstream historical narratives have minimized or ignored the contributions of Africans. Trouillot's analysis reveals that powerful political groups determine the significance of an event and its inclusion in historical narratives. This manipulation of historical narratives reinforces existing power structures and marginalizes dissenting voices, demonstrating that history writing is deeply intertwined with political and social power dynamics. Likewise, Lynn Hunt comprehensively explores historical thinking and methodology in her book *History: Why It Matters*. Hunt explores how historians interpret, analyze, and write about the past in her book, encouraging readers to reflect critically on history's role in shaping contemporary understandings.¹⁶

1.2. Zionism's Influence on Middle Eastern Historiography

Zionism has had a profound impact on the Middle East's historiography, particularly in the narratives surrounding historical Israel and Palestine. For instance, Sayegh's work critically examines the Zionist influence on academia, highlighting how it fosters biased historiography that marginalizes Palestinian experiences while legitimizing Zionist settler narratives. He underscores the normalization of violence, racial discrimination, and the dismissal of Palestinian rights in academic discourse, calling for a more balanced and critical approach to historical writing.¹⁷ Similarly, Keith W. Whitelam,¹⁸ in "The Invention of Ancient Israel: The Silencing of Palestinian History," criticizes Zionist influences on academic history as a means of marginalizing Palestinian narratives and constructing an idealized version of ancient Israel in the study of history. This narrative has been reinforced through biblical studies, particularly in Western academia, where the focus on ancient Israel often overshadows and undermines the rich history of ancient Palestine.

Zionism has heavily influenced biblical studies discourse, emphasizing ancient Israel's historical significance. Scholars like Philip Davies¹⁹ in "In Search of Ancient Israel" argue that most of what is commonly accepted as ancient Israel history is, in fact, scholarly construction rather than objective historical reality. This construction legitimizes modern Zionist claims to the land while neglecting or ignoring Palestinian civilizations' historical presence and contributions. Publications shaped by Zionist influence often depict Palestine

¹⁴ Gabriel Piterberg, *An Ottoman Tragedy: History and Historiography at Play* (California: University of California Press, 2003), 102.

¹⁵ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 70-108.

¹⁶ Lynn Hunt, *History: Why It Matters* (Cambridge: Polity, 2018), 130.

¹⁷ Faye A. Sayegh, *Zionist Colonialism in Palestine* (Beirut, Lebanon: Research Center Palestine Liberation Organization, 1965), 11-21.

¹⁸ Keith W. Whitelam, *The Invention of Ancient Israel: The Silencing of Palestinian History* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 44-45.

¹⁹ Philip R. Davies, *In Search of "Ancient Israel": A Study in Biblical Origins (The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies)* (London, the UK: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), 85.

as an empty or underdeveloped land before the arrival of the Israelites. This reinforces the narrative of a “return” to a promised land. This narrative completely rejects the diverse and long history of Palestinian society and culture.

According to Joseph A. Massad, Zionist settlers have renamed and reconfigured Palestinian geography, showing the direct influence of Zionist ideology on archaeology and history. Before Israel was established, “Israel” referred to the Jewish people rather than a physical state. However, the renaming of Palestine as Israel was part of a broader Zionist strategy to reshape the land’s history and identity. Archaeology played a crucial role in this transformation, serving as a tool to revive the so-called ancient Jewish lands and reframe Palestinian histories according to Zionist narratives. Massad highlights how Zionist institutions like the Jewish National Fund’s “Place Names Committee” systematically renamed villages, towns, and regions to erase Palestinian presence and reinforce a Jewish historical claim.²⁰

1.2.1. Zionism’s Control Over Academic Institutions

Zionism has had a significant impact on academia, profoundly shaping literature. Many works in this area are instruments of Zionist ideology and reflections of its influence. According to Ghassan Kanafani²¹, literature became integral to the Zionist movement. It played a crucial role in shaping public opinion, mobilizing political and military support, and expanding the network. Notable examples, such as George Eliot’s “Daniel Deronda” and Theodor Herzl’s “The Old New Land,” are classic examples of literature promoting Zionist ideals, preparing the groundwork for political Zionism. These works often portray Jewish characters overcoming oppression, emphasizing Jewish superiority and the inevitability of reclaiming Palestine. In addition, Eliot and Herzl marginalize Arab populations. For example, Herzl’s work, in particular, is cited as laying the foundational style for Zionist literature, depicting Palestine as an uninhabited land awaiting Jewish revival, a narrative that disregards the existing Arab population.

The impact of Zionism extends beyond literature to the broader academic landscape. The Israeli academy, despite its alleged commitment to free speech, systematically represses criticism of Israeli genocide in Gaza, revealing its dependence on Zionist influences. Maya Wind²², in her book “Towers of Ivory and Steel: How Israeli Universities Deny Palestinian Freedom,” provides a compelling critique of the academic environment in Israel, focusing on how Zionism controls and diverts knowledge production. Wind argues that Israeli universities have become academic apparatuses for Judaization policies as part of Zionist strategies, serving beyond their role as educational entities to support Israel’s demographic and strategic objectives.

Wind presents specific examples illustrating how Zionism influences academic production in Israel and Palestine. A prime example is the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, founded in 1918. Strategically positioned on Mount Scopus, its location has symbolic

²⁰ Joseph A. Massad, *The Persistence of the Palestinian Question: Essays on Zionism and the Palestinian Struggle* (New York, New York: Routledge, 2006), 36.

²¹ Ghassan Kanafani, *Palestinian Literature and the Zionist Narrative* (London, the UK: Pluto Press, 2022), 42-43.

²² Maya Wind, *Towers of Ivory and Steel: How Israeli Universities Deny Palestinian Freedom* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), 23.

significance, playing a significant role on the road to pre-Nakba Israel.²³ The university's law faculty has played a major role in establishing laws governing property acquisition, citizenship, security, and emergency measures, which support and legitimize Israel's apartheid regime. These laws have facilitated Israel's ongoing displacement of Palestinians and Jewish settlement policies, deepening the occupation. As Sen noted²⁴, it is obvious how academia is involved in Israeli crimes, particularly its suppression of criticism of Israeli policies in Gaza. Israeli universities are far from being neutral but rather serve Zionism, censor Palestinians and Palestinian voices²⁵ or critical voices from Israel, and mobilize international support for Israel's military actions, as seen in responses from institutions like Hebrew University and Tel Aviv University. Wind documents several examples and provides strong evidence to demonstrate how Zionism holds significant influence over academic institutions, curtailing free speech and critical scholarship that challenges the Israeli state narrative.²⁶

1.3. Financial Influence on Academic Production

A well-documented correlation exists between academic curricula, academic activities, publications, and university donations, demonstrating the link between power, money, and academic production. According to Draege and Lestra²⁷, financial dependencies, especially those from Gulf countries, can potentially restrict academic freedom and research topics. Financial dependencies weaken the independence of universities and largely determine educational and research policies, even affecting curricula. Therefore, universities and academic institutions confront significant challenges in maintaining independence amidst the political and ideological pressures accompanying external funding.

Aldo Geuna²⁸ examined how financing mechanisms impact university behavior, performance, and independence. Geuna's analysis, particularly with Ben R. Martin²⁹, shows that funding and third-party contributions are significant in universities' strategic decisions and priorities. These funding structures often lead to unintended negative consequences, such as reduced academic freedom and a shift toward market-driven behavior within universities. Geuna's research demonstrates that fund allocations can divert universities to prioritize specific research areas and determine policies to secure more funding, potentially at the expense of academic freedom and independence.³⁰ University funding can be diverted to prioritize specific research areas, resulting in policies that may adversely affect academic

²³ Gabriel Piterberg, *The Returns of Zionism: Myths, Politics and Scholarship in Israel* (London, the UK: Verso, 2008), 143.

²⁴ Somdeep Sen, "Israeli academia is directly complicit in the crimes of the state", *Aljazeera* (10 September 2024), <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2024/9/10/israeli-academia-is-directly-complicit-in-the-crimes-of-the-state> (Accessed Date 25 September 2024).

²⁵ Lana Tatour, "Censoring Palestine: Human Rights, Academic Freedom and the IHRA", *Australian Journal of Human Rights*, (13 August 2024), 1-9.

²⁶ Wind, *Towers of Ivory and Steel: How Israeli Universities Deny Palestinian Freedom*, 105.

²⁷ Jonas Bergan Draege, Martin Lestra, "Gulf-Funding of British Universities and the Focus on Human Development", *Middle East Law and Governance* 7/1 (2015), 25-49.

²⁸ Aldo Geuna, "The Changing Rationale for European University Research Funding: Are There Negative Unintended Consequences?", *Journal of Economic Issues* 35/3 (2016), 607-632.

²⁹ Aldo Geuna and Ben R. Martin, "University Research Evaluation and Funding: An International Comparison" *Minerva* 41 (2003), 625.

³⁰ Geuna, "The Changing Rationale for European University Research Funding", 625.

freedom and independence. Marx critiqued this dynamic between the bourgeoisie and knowledge production, in which economic structures shape the superstructure, including the education systems that perpetuate them.³¹ By controlling resources, the “educators” are shaped by those in power, raising critical questions about academic autonomy and ideological influence.

This literature shows that Zionism significantly influences academic production, including historical narratives, academic institutions, literature, and financial ties. Zionism heavily shapes the academic discourse surrounding Palestine, marginalizes alternative perspectives, reinforces existing power structures, and manipulates historical and academic narratives to serve specific agendas in favor of Israel. As a result, grasping how knowledge is produced and controlled in contexts of power and conflict is essential to understanding how science links to power.

2. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework: Power, Hegemony, and Academic Production

The interaction between power and knowledge production and the relationship between hegemony and knowledge have been central critical theory themes that Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci largely examine. Foucault’s concept of power-knowledge relations and Gramsci’s theory of cultural hegemony provide essential frameworks for understanding how dominant power structures shape academic production. This part of the paper argues that academic productions and publications are significantly influenced by power dynamics and hegemony, mainly focusing on how Zionism controls and diverts academia, especially in the United States.³²

The discussion about how power shapes knowledge or information production dates to years ago. Michel Foucault is one of the prominent scholars, having written many pieces about the topic, making him the discipline chief. Michel Foucault’s analysis of power-knowledge posits that power and knowledge are not separate entities but are interlinked, mutually reinforcing each other. According to Foucault, power is pervasive and productive, shaping what is considered knowledge and, in turn, being structured by that knowledge.³³ Foucault’s theory underscores that power is not merely repressive but also productive, creating regimes of truth that define what is accepted as legitimate knowledge. This relationship suggests that academic institutions and scholarly work are embedded within broader power structures that influence what can be known, said, and published.

In his book “Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison,” Foucault³⁴ illustrates how institutions, including education, produce, implement and consolidate power relations.

³¹ Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy* (London: Penguin books, 1993), 83–89.

³² Vladimir Bortun, “How Academia Failed the Test of the War in Gaza”, *Jacobin* (27 July 2024), <https://jacobin.com/2024/07/academia-gaza-genocide-self-censorship> (Accessed Date 24 September 2024).

³³ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London: Penguin Books, 2019), 137-149; Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 119.

³⁴ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 133.

Using the panopticon as a metaphor, he illustrates how surveillance and disciplinary mechanisms regulate behavior and ensure conformity to authority's norms.³⁵

Foucault's power-knowledge concept is pivotal in understanding complex dynamics within educational institutions. According to Foucault, power is not only a top-down oppressive mechanism but also a complex network pervading all levels of society, including the academy. Therefore, power produces knowledge; in turn, knowledge produces power, reinforcing existing hierarchies and structures. This cyclical relationship implies that what is accepted as 'truth' within academic settings often reflects power dynamics.

According to Foucault, power dynamics do not naturally expose or affect knowledge. Instead, some institutions deliberately facilitate knowledge production by controlling, diverting, and managing it. For example, in "Discipline and Punishment", Foucault explores how power is embedded within institutional structures. As mentioned before, Bentham's panopticon, designed for a prison, became a symbol for Foucault of modern disciplinary societies. In a panopticon, prisoners know they can be watched anytime, prompting them to regulate their behavior. Therefore, power holders, or, in other words, governments or regimes that control society, decide and dictate the rules shaping life. Foucault extends this concept to schools, hospitals, and military bases, arguing that institutions can regulate behavior through surveillance by disciplining individuals.³⁶ These insights are crucial for understanding how Zionist influence shapes academic production at U.S. universities.

The surveillance in educational institutions goes beyond physical surveillance to include intellectual surveillance as well.³⁷ Curricula, research agendas, and publication opportunities are all subject to monitoring, censorship, and control, often serving the interests of powerful institutions or power structures. For instance, research funding might be allocated to areas aligned with corporate or governmental interests while critical or oppositional perspectives are marginalized. The result is a situation where specific knowledge is produced and disseminated while others are suppressed. There is evidence in German academia that research collaborations with Israeli institutions have contributed to the development of surveillance technologies used against Palestinians. Max Planck Society and the German government have funded Israeli research centers that use AI technologies for mass surveillance.³⁸ Concerns have been raised about how such technologies contribute to human rights violations in occupied Palestinian territories, as well as reinforced power structures that suppress critical thinking.

As governments or power holders have been superior in creating, disseminating, and removing discourse by force, if necessary, the dominant power structures ensure that the narratives and knowledge produced within these institutions serve their interests. This is done through selective funding, censorship, and intellectual filtering, where only research that aligns with the desired narrative is supported or allowed to thrive. In contrast, critical, oppositional, or alternative perspectives are often silenced, marginalized, suppressed, or discredited. This results in a 'homogenized' intellectual environment where certain concepts,

³⁵ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 137–140.

³⁶ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 103.

³⁷ Barry Chazan, *A Philosophy of Israel Education: A Relational Approach* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), 20–30.

³⁸ Hebh Jamal, "How German top research institute benefits Israeli AI tech used against Palestinians" (The New Arab, 18 July 2024), <https://www.newarab.com/investigations/how-german-academia-contributes-surveillance-palestinians> (Accessed Date 18 August 2024).

theories, and discourses dominate. This is not necessarily because they are the most accurate or truthful but because they are the most aligned with the interests of those in power. Consequently, this dynamic reinforces existing power hierarchies and prevents the emergence of diverse or dissenting voices that could challenge the status quo.

2.1. Discourses and Power Dynamics

In “The History of Sexuality”, Foucault examines how power relations construct and maintain discourses.³⁹ Discourses are not merely ways of speaking or writing but are systems of thought defining and limiting what can be said and thought about a particular subject. Power relations shape these discourses, determining which perspectives are legitimate and which are not. This process of legitimization and marginalization is crucial in academic knowledge production. For example, discourses on sexuality in the 19th century were determined by power relations within medical, legal, and religious institutions. These discourses defined ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’ sexual behavior, affecting people’s perceptions of their own sexual characteristics. Similarly, power relations determine, manipulate, and alter discourses on different academic topics, including social science disciplines such as politics, history, and international relations. Dominant groups influence these discourses by funding certain kinds of research, promoting particular theoretical frameworks, and marginalizing dissenting voices.

Applying Foucault’s theory to the context of Zionist influence in U.S. academia reveals how power-knowledge dynamics operate within educational institutions. Zionist groups, through their financial and political influence, can shape the production of knowledge by funding research that aligns with their interests and by marginalizing critical perspectives on Israel. This creates a regime of truth where certain narratives about Israel and its policies are promoted, while others are suppressed.

Applying Foucault’s theory to the context of Zionist influence in U.S. academia reveals how power-knowledge dynamics operate within educational institutions. Zionist groups, through their financial and political influence, shape knowledge production by funding research that aligns with the interests of Israel. Furthermore, Israel marginalizes critical perspectives by pressing on academicians and researchers. This creates a regime of truth where certain narratives about Israel and its policies are promoted, while others are suppressed.

One of the primary mechanisms by which Zionist influence manifests is through control over funding sources. It is widely known that universities and researchers often rely on external grants and donations to support their work. Organizations and individuals with Zionist affiliations can direct substantial financial resources to universities, creating dependencies that influence research agendas. Even though Israel has been committing genocide in Gaza since October 7, many journals published by Elsevier, Wiley, Taylor & Francis, Springer Nature, and SAGE have ignored collecting articles for a special issue about the Israeli genocidal war on Gaza except for the *Middle East Critique*.⁴⁰ This omission highlights the broader issue of academic gatekeeping, where editorial decisions and

³⁹ Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction* (New York, New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 17–36.

⁴⁰ See this issue: *Middle East Critique* 33/2 (2024).

institutional constraints often marginalize politically sensitive topics. As explored in ‘The Politics of Academic Publishing’, such practices reflect underlying power dynamics that shape the dissemination of knowledge and limit the representation of critical perspectives.⁴¹

Furthermore, significant donations from pro-Israel organizations are used to prioritize Israel-positive projects and undermine Israel-critical research. Consequently, critical perspectives on Israel and its actions, particularly when it comes to the treatment of Palestinians, are excluded as a result of this financial leverage. On the other hand, academic conferences, big publishing houses, and venues also play a crucial role in determining and sharing the concepts, perspectives, and generally what is accepted as ‘academic’. For instance, the Marcus Foundation’s funding of pro-Israel programs in U.S. universities, such as establishing Israel Studies chairs and redefining campus antisemitism, demonstrates how financial contributions influence academic priorities.⁴² Similarly, the Canary Mission platform has been heavily criticized for its role in blacklisting academics and activists who engage in or support Israel-critical research, leading to professional marginalization, reputational damage, and restricted opportunities for dissenting voices. By anonymously maintaining profiles filled with inflammatory accusations, the Canary Mission creates a chilling effect on academic freedom and public discourse, deterring individuals from expressing solidarity with Palestinian rights or questioning Israeli policies.⁴³ These platforms are not only beyond academics, but they turn academicians and researchers into profit machines by utilizing their work.⁴⁴

Journals and conference organizers face pressure to reject papers that challenge Zionist narratives or promote pro-Israeli studies. This filtering and censorship function ensures that certain viewpoints are promoted while others are suppressed. Individual academic careers can also be affected, as those who produce critical scholarship in Israel may find it more difficult to secure tenure, promotions, or publication opportunities. For example, Cornel West’s tenure application at Harvard was rejected because he publicly criticized Israeli policies and supported Palestinian rights.⁴⁵ Norman Finkelstein’s dismissal was another striking indication of Zionism’s suppression of academia by prominent anti-Zionist Jewish American academics.⁴⁶ The process has been extended to students as well. Students at prestigious universities⁴⁷ such as Yale, Harvard, Columbia, and Rutgers faced disciplinary action from their administrations for organizing pro-Palestinian rallies.⁴⁸ Furthermore, almost all Palestinian students have been frequently exposed to surveillance, disciplinary

⁴¹ Pamela Shoemaker, *The Gatekeeping of Political Messages*, ed. Kate Kenski - Kathleen Hall Jamieson (Oxford University Press, 2016), 1/347–358.

⁴² Erica L. Green, “The Man Who Helped Redefine Campus Antisemitism”, *The New York Times* (24 March 2024).

⁴³ Murtaza Hussain, “The Real Cancel Culture: Pro-Israel Blacklists” (The Intercept, 4 October 2020).

⁴⁴ Arash Abizadeh, “Academic journals are a lucrative scam – and we’re determined to change that”, *The Guardian* (16 July 2024), <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/article/2024/jul/16/academic-journal-publishers-universities-price-subscriptions> (Accessed Date 18 September 2024).

⁴⁵ “Renowned Professor Cornel West Claims Harvard Tenure Refusal Linked to pro-Palestine Stance”, *The New Arab* (15 March 2021).

⁴⁶ Matthew Abraham, “The Question of Palestine and the Subversion of Academic Freedom: DePaul’s Denial of Tenure to Norman G. Finkelstein”, *Arab Studies Quarterly* 33/3–4 (2011), 179–203.

⁴⁷ “Institutionalising Zionism in American Academia”, *Middle East Monitor* (30 January 2014).

⁴⁸ Cemil Aydın, “American Universities under Attack for Challenging Pro-Israeli Political Consensus”, *Anadolu Agency* (23 May 2024).

action, and expulsion for their activism. These illegitimate actions left these students with loan debts and limited academic prospects, decreasing their enthusiasm. These cases highlight how academicians and students have been subject to systemic challenges and repercussions when opposing hegemonic Zionist narratives.

While Foucault focuses on the relationship between power and knowledge, Gramsci's cultural hegemony examines how dominant groups maintain control by appealing to ideological consent rather than coercion alone. These frameworks reveal the dual nature of control in academia, where power and consent lie at the center of knowledge production.

2.2. Cultural Hegemonic Academia

Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony complements Foucault's insights by explaining how dominant groups maintain control through the consent of the governed rather than through coercion.⁴⁹ Gramsci argued that the ruling class sustains and secures dominance by establishing and disseminating a hegemonic culture—a set of beliefs, values, and norms. This hegemonic culture extends to all levels of society, including educational institutions, thus shaping academic knowledge and production. In "Selections from the Prison Notebooks," Gramsci discusses how intellectuals and educational systems play a crucial role in maintaining this hegemony, evident in how Zionist ideologies are prioritized, promoted, and penetrated within US academia.⁵⁰ It can be argued that academic institutions' support of Zionist perspectives is part of this broader hegemonic strategy, ensuring that critical voices and alternative narratives remain marginalized.

As Gramsci's cultural hegemony is applied to this case study, it is evident that Zionism has established a hegemonic influence within US academia. This hegemony is maintained through various mechanisms, including charitable foundations that fund universities and research centers, steering academic research to serve Zionism.⁵¹ These foundations often provide considerable grants and endowments to universities, research centers, or institutes, which determine and influence research agendas and academic discourse worldwide. For example, organizations such as the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), Middle East Forum⁵², and other pro-Israel lobbying groups have been known to influence academic institutions by funding programs that promote Zionist narratives, thus marginalizing critical perspectives on Israeli policies and the Palestinian struggle.

Moreover, leading academic journals, publications, and media platforms are not immune to Zionist propaganda, interference, manipulation, and influences. Editorial boards, peer review processes, and publication policies often reflect the prevailing power structures, ensuring that certain narratives are promoted while others are suppressed.⁵³ This control over academic production serves to legitimize Zionist policies and marginalize critical scholarship

⁴⁹ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (International Publishers: New York, 1971), 113.

⁵⁰ Kate Crehan, *Gramsci's Common Sense: Inequality and Its Narratives* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 25.

⁵¹ Ilan Pappé, Tariq Dana, Nadia Nasser-Najjab, 'Palestine Studies, Knowledge Production, and the Struggle for Decolonisation' 33/2 (2024), 173–193.

⁵² "Daniel Pipes' pro-Israel think-tank holds anti-Qatar event", *Aljazeera* (07 February 2019), <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/2/7/daniel-pipes-pro-israel-think-tank-holds-anti-qatar-event> (Accessed Date 25 September 2024).

⁵³ Rabea Eghbariah, 'The Harvard Law Review Refused to Run This Piece About Genocide in Gaza', *The Nation* (21 November 2023).

that challenges the dominant narratives regarding Israel and Palestine. For instance, as shown in the case of Steven Salaita, whose job offer was terminated by the University of Illinois due to his tweets criticizing Israeli actions in Gaza, academic freedom is often compromised to align with pro-Zionist sentiments.⁵⁴

Zionist hegemony has a negative impact on academic freedom, which has been long debated all over the world, especially in the UK, for being ‘elitist’.⁵⁵ Scholars often face significant obstacles in publishing work critical of Israel or supporting Palestinian rights, including difficulty receiving funding or scholarship, hostility from colleagues, and challenges in publishing their work.⁵⁶ This creates an environment where self-censorship becomes a survival strategy for academics, further entrenching the hegemonic influence of Zionism in academia. This phenomenon is discussed in works like “Academic Freedom and Palestine: A Personal Account” written by Petersen-Overton⁵⁷, which explores various instances where academic freedom has been curtailed to protect Zionist interests.

Furthermore, Zionism’s influence in US academia is not restricted to one specific discipline. Instead, it is a wide range of subjects such as economics, law, political science, and international relations. Research questioning or criticizing the legitimacy of Israeli policies, especially regarding the genocidal wars, occupation or settlement policies, or drawing attention to Palestinian struggles, is often ignored, sidelined, and marginalized, and Palestinians are being dehumanized for justifying Israeli genocide and for the sake of Zionism.⁵⁸ This selective production and dissemination of knowledge bolster, strengthen, and protect the power structures preserving Israeli hegemony. The suppression of Ilan Pappé’s works, an Israeli historian who has faced significant backlash for his critical views on Israel, exemplifies this dynamic.

In conclusion, the nexus or integration of Foucault’s power-knowledge framework and Gramsci’s theory of cultural hegemony provides an analytical framework to comprehend how power dynamics influence academic production. In the case of US academia, Zionism holds significant control over scholarly work, shaping research agendas, publication practices, and academic discourse. This hegemonic influence not only marginalizes critical perspectives but also sustains the dominant narratives and policies of Israel, including the occupation of Palestinian territories by settling Jews in the West Bank or the invasion of Gaza.

2.2.1. The Role of Zionism in US Academia

As an example of how power and ideology intersect to construct and shape discourse and silence critical voices, Zionism’s role in the US academia presents an excellent example.

⁵⁴ Steven Salaita, *Uncivil Rites: Palestine and the Limits of Academic Freedom* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2015), 24.

⁵⁵ M. J. Harrison, Keith Weightman, ‘Academic Freedom and Higher Education in England’, *Academic Freedom and Higher Education in England* 25/1 (1974), 35.

⁵⁶ Ian S. Lustick, *Unsettled States, Disputed Lands: Britain and Ireland, France and Algeria, Israel and the West Bank-Gaza* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 7–25.

⁵⁷ Kristofer J. Petersen-Overton, ‘Academic Freedom and Palestine: A Personal Account’ 33/3–4 (2011), 256–267.

⁵⁸ Noam Chomsky, *Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel, and the Palestinians* (Boston: South End Press, 1999), 535; Jaiori I. Funez-Flores, “The Coloniality of Academic Freedom and the Palestine Exception”, *Middle East Critique* (2024), 2.

Through political lobbying, financial pressures, and utilizing antisemitism for accusation, Zionist organizations have established a form of cultural hegemony within US academic institutions. This has determined what is considered legitimate knowledge and acceptable discourse. This dynamic reflects Michel Foucault's concept of power-knowledge relations and Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony, where dominant groups shape the intellectual and cultural sphere to serve their interests.⁵⁹

Political influence is exerted by Zionist organizations such as the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), and the Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law. These organizations leverage their power to shape campus discourse. Moreover, these groups use financial and political pressure to influence university administrations, pushing them to adopt policies and practices that promote pro-Israel stances while suppressing pro-Palestinian perspectives. Therefore, as the most steadfast supporter of Israel, the U.S. extends its support beyond foreign policy to educational institutions. For instance, organizations like the ADL and the Brandeis Center have systematically pressured universities to restrict the activities of "Students for Justice in Palestine" and other groups critical of Israel based on unverified accusations of antisemitism and terror.⁶⁰ These actions align with Foucault's assertion that power is exercised through the production and regulation of knowledge⁶¹; in this case, the concept of antisemitism is used strategically to silence opposition and legitimize only certain narratives within academic spaces.

Several cases illustrate how Zionist influence shapes the United States academy. A notable example is the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's decision to rescind a job offer to Steven Salaita in 2014. Salaita had been critical of Israel's actions in Gaza on social media. He was framed by pro-Israel American media channels such as The New York Times and CNN for sharing 'uncivil' or anti-Israel tweets exposing the curtailment of academic freedom⁶² in the U.S. when criticizing Israeli genocide, occupation, and ethnic cleansing.⁶³ Moreover, his appointment was revoked by the university after pressure from pro-Israel donors. This case sparked widespread debate about academic freedom and highlighted how external pressures can influence university decisions. Another example is the cancellation of a course about Palestine at the University of California, Berkeley, in 2016. The course was canceled after pro-Israel groups complained that it was biased against Israel. Although this course was later reinstated after objections from academic freedom advocates, the case clearly revealed and illustrated how Zionist lobbying affects the academy in the US.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ "Bill Ackman leads reaction to Claudine Gay's resignation as he celebrates shortest tenure in Harvard history and asks if MIT president Sally Kornbluth is next" (02 January 2024).

⁶⁰ Azad Essa, "At US universities, free speech isn't free for pro-Palestine activists", *Middle East Eye* (01 November 2023), <https://www.middleeasteye.net/big-story/israel-palestine-war-us-universities-free-speech> (Accessed Date 18 September 2024).

⁶¹ Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*, 158.

⁶² Peter N. Kirstein, "Steven Salaita, the Media, and the Struggle for Academic Freedom", *American Association of University Professors* (February 2016), <https://www.aaup.org/article/steven-salaita-media-and-struggle-academic-freedom> (Accessed Date 20 September 2024).

⁶³ Mayra Cuevas, "Anti-Israel tweets cost professor new job at University of Illinois, rep says", *CNN* (09 August 2014), <https://edition.cnn.com/2014/08/08/us/anti-israel-tweets-tenure/index.html> (Accessed Date 21 September 2024).

⁶⁴ Emily Mulder, 'UC Berkeley's Ban on Palestine Course "McCarthyist"', *Aljazeera* (18 September 2016).

The dismissal or penalization of academics who express opposing perspectives about Israel further exemplifies U.S. academia's control mechanisms. Many cases demonstrate how universities, under pressure from Zionist lobbies and donors, suppress critical scholarship. For instance, Arizona State University attempted to require Palestinian-American academic Hatem Bazian to sign an agreement not to criticize Israel as a condition for speaking on campus.⁶⁵ Similarly, Professor John Cheney-Lippold received administrative punishment at the University of Michigan after refusing to write a recommendation letter for a student to study at Tel Aviv University due to his academic boycott of Israel.⁶⁶ These incidents exemplify Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony, wherein dominant groups, such as Zionist lobbies, maintain supremacy by molding the cultural and ideological context to maximize their control. The suppression of pro-Palestinian voices and the promotion of Zionist narratives in US academia have created a hegemonic Zionist culture, demonized Israeli criticism, and encouraged compliance with Zionism. Lastly, Rabea Eghbariah's paper⁶⁷ conceptualizing the Nakba, titled "Toward Nakba as a Legal Concept," was declined to be published by Columbia Law Review and Harvard Law Review after the pressure of Zionist lobbies. Harvard solicited and edited it but did not publish it; Columbia removed and reinstated his article following staff protests.⁶⁸ This example clearly proves the controversy and highlights that Palestinian scholarship has been silenced.

On the other hand, accusations of antisemitism have become a powerful tool for Zionism to silence criticism of Israel within academic institutions. This tactic is evident in recent Congressional resolutions, such as the 2023 resolution condemning "Hamas' and antisemitic student activities on U.S. campuses".⁶⁹ The resolution equates support for Palestinian rights with antisemitism, thus justifying restrictive measures against student organizations and academic discussions critical of Israel. Furthermore, the proposed "Stopping Antisemitism on College Campuses Act," introduced by Senator Tim Scott, threatens to withdraw federal funding from institutions that permit or support so-called antisemitic activities, effectively narrowing the scope of permissible discourse to exclude critiques of Israel.⁷⁰ This reflects Foucault's argument that power is not just repressive but productive—it creates norms, discourses, and truths. In this context, labeling anti-Zionist speech as antisemitic creates a normative framework where pro-Palestinian perspectives are delegitimized and suppressed, shaping U.S. academia's intellectual atmosphere.

Financial leverage is another key mechanism through which Zionist groups retain control over U.S. academia. Rich donors and alumni with strong ties to Israel have used their financial contributions as leverage to influence university policies and decisions. Harvard

⁶⁵ Nora Barrows-Friedman, "Arizona university forces speakers to sign pledge they don't boycott Israel", *Electronic Intifada* (07 March 2018) <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/nora-barrows-friedman/arizona-university-forces-speakers-sign-pledge-they-dont-boycott-israel> (Accessed Date 21 September 2024).

⁶⁶ "Michigan professor embroiled in Israel boycott row", *BBC* (21 September 2018), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-45592553> (Accessed Date 19 September 2024).

⁶⁷ Rabea Eghbariah, "Toward Nakba as a Legal Concept", *Columbia Law Review*, 124/4 (2024), 887-992.

⁶⁸ Jonathan Guyer, "Why are America's elite universities so afraid of this scholar's paper?", *The Guardian* (09 June 2024), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/jun/09/columbia-law-review-rabea-eghbariah-palestine-censorship-controversy> (Accessed Date 18 September 2024).

⁶⁹ "Stopping Antisemitism on College Campuses Act", *Scott Senate* (16 April 2023), <https://www.scott.senate.gov/media-center/press-releases/senator-scott-introduces-bill-to-take-on-antisemitism-on-college-campuses/> (Accessed Date 24 September 2024).

⁷⁰ "Stopping Antisemitism on College Campuses Act" (16 April 2023).

University and the University of Pennsylvania, for instance, have been threatened with a withdrawal of donations from prominent donors since the administrations of these universities did not publicly condemn pro-Palestinian student protests against Israel's genocide in Gaza.⁷¹ Billionaire Bill Ackman demanded that these universities disclose the names of students who signed pro-Palestinian petitions, stating that his companies would not hire them, thereby directly threatening their future professional opportunities.⁷² The role of donors in influencing academic policy is a clear example of Gramsci's cultural hegemony, where control is exerted not just through coercion but through the consent of those within the system. By aligning financial support with specific ideological stances, these donors help establish a hegemonic culture in which support for Israel is normalized, and criticism is marginalized.

Case studies further illustrate how Zionist influence operates within U.S. universities. At Columbia University, a report titled "The Palestine Exception to Free Speech" highlighted the suppression of pro-Palestinian voices on campus, documenting numerous instances where events were canceled, or speakers were banned in the name of preventing antisemitic propaganda.⁷³ Similarly, at Yale University, Professor Zareena Grewal was subjected to a campaign for dismissal after making public statements condemning Israel's policies and supporting Palestinian rights to resist occupation.⁷⁴ Although Yale defended Grewal under academic freedom, the backlash from Zionist groups and donors increased pressure on the administration to take harsh action. These cases reflect Foucault's idea that power operates through networks and institutions to control what is said and what remains unsaid, thereby shaping the boundaries of academic freedom.

Zionism's deep influence in U.S. academia has broader implications for academic freedom and intellectual diversity. The universities, once regarded as a space for critical inquiry and plurality of voices, have become a battleground where power dynamics dictate discourse and decide the course of the academy. The elimination of pro-Palestinian academics or any events and the eradication of critical thought about Israel fundamentally undermine academic freedom. As a 2016 Columbia University Law School report noted, the "Palestine exception to free speech" represents a disturbing trend that threatens academic institutions' integrity.⁷⁵ The suppression of dissent is often justified and legitimized by appeals to "security" and "safety," particularly concerning Jewish students' feelings of safety on campus. However, as Gramsci argues, this is part of a broader hegemonic strategy to align

⁷¹ Fiona Herzog, "Penn alumni, donors withdraw support from University following response to campus activism", *The Daily Pennsylvanian* (29 May 2024), <https://www.thedp.com/article/2024/05/penn-donors-react-encampment-university-response> (Accessed Date 21 September 2024).

⁷² Kwan Wei Kevin Tan, "'Bill Ackman Wants Harvard, MIT, and UPenn's Presidents to 'Resign in Disgrace'", *Business Insider* (07 December 2023), <https://www.businessinsider.com/bill-ackman-harvard-mit-upenn-presidents-should-resign-disgrace-2023-12> (Accessed Date 15 July 2024).

⁷³ "Palestine Legal & Center for Constitutional Rights. The Palestine Exception to Free Speech: A Movement Under Attack in the US", *Center for Constitutional Rights* (30 September 2015) <https://ccrjustice.org/the-palestine-exception> (Accessed Date 18 September 2024).

⁷⁴ Snejana Farberov, "Radical Yale professor faces calls to be fired over comments on Hamas attacks", *New York Post* (12 October 2023) <https://nypost.com/2023/10/12/radical-yale-professor-faces-calls-to-be-fired-over-comments-on-hamas-attacks/> (Accessed Date 10 September 2024).

⁷⁵ "Palestine Legal & Center for Constitutional Rights. The Palestine Exception to Free Speech: A Movement Under Attack in the US" (30 September 2015).

the interests of various social groups with those of the ruling elite—in this case, the Zionist establishment. Thus, the notion of security is weaponized to suppress dissent and maintain ideological conformity. This reinforces Foucault's idea that knowledge production is a site of power struggles.

Conclusion

This study critically examines the influence of Zionism on academic production and freedom within U.S. universities, utilizing Michel Foucault's concept of power-knowledge and Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony as its theoretical framework. The paper argues that Zionist organizations leverage political lobbying, financial pressures, and accusations of antisemitism to establish a form of cultural hegemony within academic institutions. This hegemony dictates what is considered legitimate knowledge and acceptable discourse, systematically marginalizing critical scholarship that challenges Zionist narratives and promoting pro-Israel stances. By exploring the dynamics of power and knowledge, the study reveals how the entanglement of ideological and financial interests shapes the contours of academic freedom, research agendas, and public discourse in higher education. Foucault's power-knowledge framework provides insight into how knowledge production is intertwined with power dynamics; whereby dominant groups control which perspectives are amplified or silenced within academic settings. In the context of U.S. academia, Zionist groups have utilized their financial and political influence to shape educational policies and research agendas that favor their interests. By funding research centers, influencing academic programs, and promoting specific discourses, Zionist organizations create a regime of truth that supports Israeli policies while marginalizing pro-Palestinian perspectives. This dynamic reflects Gramsci's notion of cultural hegemony, where dominant groups maintain control not just through coercion but through the consent and alignment of cultural and intellectual institutions with their ideology. The examples provided in this study, such as the rescinding of Steven Salaita's job offer at the University of Illinois and the pressure on the University of California, Berkeley, to cancel a course on Palestine, highlight the tangible effects of Zionist lobbying on academic freedom. These incidents demonstrate how external pressures from donors and advocacy groups can shape university policies, curtail free speech, and suppress critical scholarship. The pervasive use of the antisemitism accusation further restricts the scope of permissible discourse, effectively delegitimizing criticism of Israel and protecting Zionist interests. As a result, U.S. academic institutions become sites where ideological conformity is enforced, and dissenting voices are systematically marginalized, undermining the principles of academic freedom and intellectual diversity. To foster a truly independent academic environment, it is crucial to challenge these power structures and advocate for greater transparency and integrity in knowledge production.

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Christian Zionism and Its Impact on USA Politics

► Araştırma makalesi / Research article

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Abstract

As we will see in this study, "Christian Zionism," which was historically introduced about half a century before Jewish Zionism and inspired it, is not merely a concept consisting of two words. While the Jewish ideology of returning to Palestine had a Messianic and religious jargon in ancient and medieval times, contemporary Jewish Zionism has additional secular, nationalist, and socialist components to it. It is not possible to evaluate Christian Zionism independently of specific prophecies and, of course, religion. When we look at the history of Christianity, although we see extreme anti-Semitism and, within the framework of this enmity, severe oppression and persecution of Jews, in recent years, significant Christian groups, especially American Evangelicals, have not only renounced the oppression and genocide of Jews but have decided to support Jews under all circumstances and even seem to be filled with sympathy for Jews. Can it be the reason that Christians, through their reading of the Old Testament from a different perspective in the post-Reformation period, have truly regretted their mistreatment of the Jews up to this point and have come to appreciate the Jews? Or else do economic and political interests now require such a theopolitics? Or do Christian Zionists, together with Jewish Zionists, believe that the coming Messiah at the end of the world will destroy the Al-Aqsa Mosque and build the Temple of Solomon in its place? Is it because of these beliefs that Evangelical Christians and their puppet US administration support the state of Israel under all circumstances, regardless of the human tragedy in Gaza? By seeking answers to these and similar questions in the current study, it will be presented to the reader's attention why the Western states, especially the United States, support and participate in this crime against humanity by Israel, which massacres dozens of innocent people every day.

Keywords: Christianity, Zionism, Christian Zionism, Dispensationalism.

Hıristiyan Siyonizmi ve ABD Siyasetine Etkisi

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Öz

Tarihsel olarak Yahudi Siyonizminden yaklaşık yarım asır önce tedavüle sokulan ve Yahudi siyonizmine ilham kaynağı olan "Hıristiyan Siyonizmi", bu çalışmada göreceğimiz gibi sadece iki kelimeden müteşekkil bir kavram değildir. Yahudilerin Filistin'e dönme ideolojisi, Eski ve Orta Çağda Mesihçi ve dini bir jargona sahipken, çağdaş Yahudi Siyonizmi ilave olarak laik, milliyetçi ve sosyalist bileşenlere de sahiptir. Hıristiyan Siyonizmini ise birtakım kehanetlerden ve elbette dinden bağımsız değerlendirmek mümkün gözükmemektedir. Hıristiyanlık tarihine baktığımızda aşırı bir Yahudi düşmanlığı ve bu düşmanlık çerçevesinde de Yahudilere yönelik çok ciddi baskı ve zulümler söz konusudur. Buna karşın son yıllarda hatırı sayılır Hıristiyan gruplar, özellikle de Amerika Evanjelikleri Yahudilere uyguladığı baskı ve soykırımlardan sadece vaz geçmekle kalmamış, her şart altında Yahudileri desteklemeye karar vermiş hatta Yahudi sevgisiyle dolmuş bir görüntü vermektedir. Bunun nedeni acaba Hıristiyanlar, Reformasyon sonrası dönemde farklı bir perspektiften yaptıkları Eski Ahit okumalarıyla bu zamana kadar Yahudilere yaptığı kötü muameleden gerçekten pişman olarak Yahudilerin değerini mi anlamaya başlamışlar? Yoksa ekonomik ve politik çıkarlar mı artık böyle bir teopolitiği gerektirmektedir? Ya da Hıristiyan Siyonistler Yahudi Siyonistlerle birlikte dünyanın sonuna doğru gelecek Mesih'in Mescidi Aksa'yı yıkıp yerine Süleyman Mabedini inşa edeceğine mi inanıyor? Bu inançları sebebiyle mi Evanjelik Hıristiyanlar ve onların kuklası olan ABD yönetimi Gazze'de yaşanan bu insanlık dramına aldırmadan her şart altında İsrail devletini desteklemektedir? Bu çalışmada bu ve benzeri soruların yanıtları aranarak başta ABD olmak üzere batılı devletlerin, her gün onlarca masum insanı katleden İsrail'in bu insanlık suçuna neden destek verdiği ve ortak olduğu da bir şekilde okuyucunun dikkatine sunulmuş olacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hıristiyanlık, Siyonizm, Hıristiyan Siyonizmi, Dispansasyonalizm.

Introduction

Christian Zionism is a movement that began about half a century before Jewish Zionism. The term ‘Christian Zionism’ was first used in the early 19th century, when a group of British Christian clergymen began to lobby for the return of Jews to Palestine as a necessary precondition for the return of Jesus Christ. The movement characterized by this term gained momentum from the mid-19th century when the Palestinian region became strategic for British, French, and German colonial interests in the Middle East. When Jewish Zionism was introduced by Theodore Herzl about 50 years after Christian Zionism, some of its strongest advocates were Christian clergymen. As a modern theological and political movement, Christian Zionism is based on the most extreme ideological positions of Zionism and blocks from the outset any anchor for a just peace between Palestine and Israel. In the name of religion, Christian Zionists defend and promote a worldview reduced to the ideology of empire, colonialism, and militarism. Instead of advocating peace and justice based on any religion or religious text, Christian Zionists engage in warmongering in its most extreme form, emphasizing apocalyptic events leading to the end of history.

The proponents and followers of Christian Zionism see the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 and the capture of Jerusalem by the State of Israel in 1967 as the beginning of the process of the realization of the desired state. In the theology of Christian Zionism, existence is divided into absolute good and absolute evil, placing themselves on the side of the good and their opponents on the side of the evil. This approach reminds us of the dualism of the Gnostic tradition. Modern Israel and its unconditional supporter, the United States of America, characterize their every action as the will of God and the slightest criticism of their actions and goals as anti-Semitic and demonic.¹

In this study, the definition, basic arguments, theology, and theopolitics of Christian Zionism are examined in detail, and its impact on U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East is discussed. To provide a better understanding of the subject, firstly, Zionism and Jewish Zionism, structures such as *Evangelicalism*, *Millennialism*, and *Dispensationalism*, which are the basis of the theology of Christian Zionism, will be outlined. Afterwards, the works and activities of Jewish and Christian pioneers of Zionism will be discussed. The reaction of Muslims to Zionist movements is a well-known issue since they are the first-degree victims of both Christian Zionism and Jewish Zionism. For this reason, these reactions will not be mentioned; instead, the views and arguments of Jews and Christians who react to both Jewish Zionism and Christian Zionism will be included. Since the main subject of the study is Christian Zionism and its power over American and European politics and its influence on Middle East policies, secondary issues will be briefly touched upon.

1. Concepts of ‘Zion’ and ‘Zionism’

The Hebrew Zion (יְרוּשָׁלַיִם *Şīyyōn*) was the name of a Canaanite hilltop fortress in Jerusalem, captured by the Prophet David and made the capital of the Kingdom of Israel and called the ‘City of David’ in the Old Testament. The German word *Zionismus* (Latin *Sionismus*), meaning ‘the movement to establish (and later support) a Jewish national state in Palestine,’ was first used in 1886 in *Selbst-Emancipation!*, written by Nathan Birnbaum (1864-1937)

¹ “Christian Zionism: The New Heresy that Undermines Middle East Peace”, *Middle East Monitor* (Accessed January 29, 2014).

under the pseudonym ‘Matthias Acher.’² During his student days in Vienna, Birnbaum joined the *Kadima* movement against assimilation policies and used the word *Zionism* in his first pamphlet, and then in 1885, he started publishing the newspaper *Selbst-Emancipation!* which defended Jewish rights. Birnbaum uses the term ‘Zion’ in his writings to refer to the Land of Israel in general and Jerusalem in particular. At the centre of the Zionist dream is the ideal of the return of the entire land of Palestine as land, Jerusalem as a city to the Israelites, that is, to the Jewish people, and the rebuilding of the Temple of Solomon as a temple, and the realisation of this ideal either through pre-Messianic work or by the Messiah himself.³

‘Zionism’ originally described a secular Jewish movement of the late 19th century that aimed to secure a Jewish nation-state as a haven against rising European anti-Semitism. At the end of the First World War, Zionism evolved into a project to create a Jewish state in Palestine at the expense of the Arab majority in the former Ottoman province. This project was realized in 1948 and 1949 with the approval of the United Nations. For the majority of Jews in Israel and the Diaspora, Zionism was an innocent concept, not open to debate. Zionists meant advocating for a Jewish state. Some Jews believed a strong military force and territorial expansion could preserve this state. In contrast, others favored compromise with the Palestinians and their territorial concessions to achieve the same end. Still, in the end, both groups called themselves Zionists and aimed at making the entire land of Palestine the land of Israel.⁴

1.1. Jewish Zionism

Jewish Zionism is divided into two groups: religious Zionism and political Zionism. It is based on the belief that the return to the Land of Israel is a fulfillment of biblical prophecy. Most eminent pioneers of Religious Zionism are Rabbi Yehudah Alkalai (1798-1878), Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer (1795-1874), and Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak HaCohen Kook (1865–1935). He claims that the secular efforts to establish a Jewish state also is part of a divine plan to integrate religious values with nationalist aims. His idea is that the Zionist movement, though its secular leadership, is a means to fulfill the ultimate salvation of the Jewish people. According to Religious Zionists, the Jewish people have a God-given right to the Land of Israel and the establishment of a Jewish state is a religious duty. This return will prepare for the coming of the Messiah too.⁵

As for Political Zionism, it is a movement that emerged towards the end of the 19th century. The movement aims to establish and preserve a national state belonging to the Jewish people. Although Zionism has split into different currents over time, it has generally maintained the aim of the Jewish people to have a home of their nation where they can determine their destiny.⁶

² The article “Zion”, *Online Etymology Dictionary*; see, Eldar Hasanoğlu, “Yahudiler Siyonizm’i Hıristiyanlardan mı aldılar?”, *Kilis 7 Aralık Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 9/1 (2022), 121.

³ Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionism: Road Map to Armageddon?* Downers Grove (Ill: IVP Academic, 2004), 312; Ilan Greilsammer, *Siyonizm*, trans. Işık Ergüden (Ankara: Dost, 2007), 7-8; Avi Shlaim, *Demir Duvar İsrail ve Arap Dünyası*, trans. Tuba Demirci (İstanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2015), 43; See, Hasanoğlu, “Yahudiler Siyonizm’i Hıristiyanlardan mı aldılar?”, 121.

⁴ Victoria Clark, *Allies for Armageddon: The Rise of Christian Zionism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 2.

⁵ Rachael Gelfman Schultz, “Religious & Zionist” *My Jewish-Learning* (Accessed August 24, 2024).

⁶ Ilan Greilsammer, *Le sionisme* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2005), 5-6.

This goal was embodied especially in the early 20th century with the immigration of Jewish settlers to Palestine and efforts to establish a Jewish state in the region by either forcibly occupying or forcibly relocating the lands of the Palestinians. It is accepted that Political Zionism begins with the *Hibbat Zion* (*Love of Zion*) movement. It was considered as a pre-Zionist Jewish nationalist movement. This nationalist Jewish movement, famous pioneers were intellectuals such as Perets Smolenskin, (1842-1885) Mosheh Leib Lilienblum, (1843-1910), and Eliezer Ben-Yehudah, (1858-1922), emerged in Russia and Romania in the early 1880s. They claimed that Jews were not just a religious group rather they were a nation.⁷

The Lithuania-born Eliezer ben Judah as a linguist and educator who contributed significantly to developing the Hebrew-speaking community in Israel by creating a revised form of modern Hebrew. It can be said thanks to him Hebrew became a language used by Jews in everyday life. Eliezer ben Judah's efforts laid the foundation for Hebrew to become the official language of Israel. Itamar, the son of Eliezer ben Judah, who settled in Palestine and taught Hebrew to his wife, became the first child to learn Hebrew from his parents centuries after Hebrew ceased to be a spoken language.⁸

The movement gained momentum after the pogroms in Ukraine in 1881–1882, when leaders such as Leo Pinsker advocated for Jewish autonomy in Palestine. The movement was ideologically divided between secular and religious Jews, particularly over the issue of observance of traditional Jewish law in the new agricultural settlements in Palestine. These tensions, together with external pressures such as restrictions by the Russian government and improvements in conditions for Jews in Russia, led to the movement's decline in the late 1890s. However, many of its members later joined Theodor Herzl's Zionist movement, particularly in opposition to the Uganda Project, and influenced its direction.⁹

Between 1850 and 1870, nationalist discourses among Jews were influenced by modernity on the one hand and the religious-messianic tradition on the other. In this period, three pioneers, two rabbis, and one secularist, can be mentioned as the theoreticians of Zionism. The first of these was Judah Alkali (1798-1878). Alkali, born in Sarajevo and living in Jerusalem, interpreted teshuvah, which is understood as *repentance* in the traditional interpretation, as a return to the Land of Israel (Eretz Israel). He emigrated to Palestine and settled there as an example of the return to Palestine.¹⁰ The second was Zvi Hirsch Kallischer (1795-1874), a priest and thinker of German origin. In his work *Derishbat Zion*, Kallischer argued that the Jewish people should return to their own land as soon as possible. He says the Messianic era has arrived, and the Messiah is coming. Kallischer's ideas, together with Alkali that the coming of the Messiah could be hastened by human endeavor were considered blasphemous by the Orthodox rabbis.¹¹ The third was Moses Hess (1812-1875), a German philosopher and one of the pioneers of the Zionist movement. Hess's *Rome und Jerusalem und Letzte Nationalitätenfrage*¹² is an early representation of Zionist thought. Hess emphasized Jewish national identity and argued that the Jewish people should establish their

⁷ Michael Stanislawski, "Hibat Tsiyon", *The Yivo Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*. (Accessed August 24, 2024).

⁸ Greilsammer, *Le sionisme*, 22-24.

⁹ Michael Stanislawski, "Hibat Tsiyon".

¹⁰ Greilsammer, *Le Sionisme*, 17-18.

¹¹ Greilsammer, *Le sionisme*, 18.

¹² Moses Hess, *Rom und Jerusalem die letzte Nationalitätenfrage* (Leipzig: M. W. Kaufmann, 1899).

own state. He was also interested in socialism and became a friend of Karl Marx. Hess's ideas were influential on the Socialist Zionists and Theodor Herzl.¹³

Theodor Herzl (1860-1904) was a journalist, writer, and politician born in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and considered a pioneer of modern Zionism. Herzl was born in Budapest and studied law at the University of Vienna. He entered the journalism profession and worked for a while in the Austrian press. Herzl's acquaintance with Zionism began in 1894 when he witnessed the unjust conviction of French officer Alfred Dreyfus on charges of espionage. This event reinforced Herzl's belief that anti-Semitism posed a constant threat to Jews and led him to develop the idea of a Jewish state. In his book *Der Judenstaat*¹⁴ (*The Jewish State*), Herzl argued for the necessity of establishing a Jewish state and introduced Zionism. Herzl organized the First Zionist Congress in Basel in 1897, officially considered the beginning of the Zionist Movement. Herzl could not get the idea of a temporary Jewish state in Uganda, which was proposed by the British and accepted at the congress and faced stiff opposition. He sought support for a Jewish state in Palestine by meeting with many officials, including Abdulhamid II sultan of the Ottoman Empire, and Pope Leo XIII. He died in 1904 at the age of 44.¹⁵

Max Nordau (born Simon Maximilian Südfeld/1849-1923) was a Jewish physician, writer and Zionist leader. Born in Germany, he studied medicine in Paris and Germany. After meeting Theodore Herzl, he joined the Zionist movement, becoming an essential figure alongside Herzl and helping him to organize the First Zionist Congress. Nordau assumed the presidency of the Zionist Congress after the death of Theodore Herzl and played an active role in the development of the Zionist movement. In 1920, in a speech in London, he stated that the only meaning of the Balfour Declaration was 'to create a Jewish majority in Palestine through Jewish immigration and then to establish a Jewish state.'¹⁶

Chaim Weizmann (1874-1952) was a chemist, politician, and Zionist leader. He was born in Belarus, studied chemistry in Germany, and settled in England in 1904. Weizmann received a concession from the British with the Balfour Declaration, which Herzl could not get from the Ottoman Empire. Weizmann, one of the leading figures of the Zionist movement, served as the first President of the State of Israel after its establishment in 1948. Weizmann, who was highly respected by Jews for his role in the establishment of Israel and his leadership in Zionism, died in Israel in 1952.¹⁷

1.2. Christian Zionism

Until the modern period, from a Christian perspective, the concept of 'Return to Zion' was interpreted metaphorically and understood as the acceptance of the Jews to Christianity. This was how it was understood in the Catholic world during the Middle Ages, and the situation did not change during the Reformation. Huldrych Zwingli (d. 1531), Martin Luther (d. 1546), Philip Melancthon (d. 1560), and John Calvin (d. 1564) also understood the Return to Zion as spiritual salvation, that is, the acceptance of Jews to Christianity.

¹³ Greilsammer, *Le sionisme*, 17-20.

¹⁴ Theodor Herzl, *der Judenstaat* (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag), 1920.

¹⁵ Greilsammer, *Le Siyonism*, 44-45, 49-50;

¹⁶ Greilsammer, *Le Siyonism*, 49-50.

¹⁷ Shlaim, *Demir Duvar İsrail ve Arap Dünyası*, 49-54; Greilsammer, *Le Siyonism*, 51-54.

Encouraging Jews to return to Jerusalem and its environs (restoration) was considered heresy and punished. For example, in 1586, Ralph Durden claimed that he would return the Jews to Palestine and that he had been commissioned by God to do so, for which he was sentenced to imprisonment. Similarly, Francis Kett, a preacher from Cambridge University, was tried as a heretic in 1585 for a similar view and was executed by burning in 1589.

In the Christian world, the literal understanding of the physical return of the Jews to Jerusalem was met with a reaction by the Church, but from time to time, some defended this idea. The Italian priest Gerardo of Borgo San Donnino (d. 1276), argued that Jews could be saved and return to the promised land. However, other Jews reacted strongly to this idea. In 1263, he was tried by the Papacy on charges of heresy and sentenced to prison, where he died.

The advocacy of the physical return of the Jews to the Promised Land was first put forward in the 1520s by the German theologian Martin Cellarius (d. 1564), an expert on Judaism. His friend Wolfgang Capito (d. 1541), under his influence, expressed the view. Capito defended this view in his introduction to Cellarius' *De Operibus Dei*. According to Capito, the physical presence of the Jews in the Promised Land is a harbinger of the Kingdom of God to be established on earth. This would be realized through the return of the Jews to their ancestral homeland. From the 1580s onwards, the physical return was expressed more concretely. In the sermons and writings of theologians such as Roger Edwards, Ralph Durden, Francis Kett, and Edmund Bunny, the absolute return of the Jews to the promised land was mentioned.

The 1600s were still the years when the image of Jews in England was still negative, and Jews were still oppressed. However, with the resistance of the Puritans, the tendency towards Judaization increased in England, and many practices and beliefs were identified with Judaism. Some Jewish Puritans in England exhibited behaviors such as observing the Sabbath, celebrating Jewish holidays, observing kosher dietary rules, being circumcised, and identifying themselves as Jewish or a member of the Israelite lineage. On the other hand, views in favor of a physical return have become more widespread. Influential figures such as Thomas Brightman, Thomas Draxe, Giles Fletcher, Sir Henry Finch, Richard Sibbes, Joseph Mede, John Cotton, and Peter Bulkeley supported these views. The Puritans were now firmly convinced that the Jews would return to the land of Palestine and that Jerusalem would be the center. When the Puritans came to power in England, the settlement of Jews in the promised land was supported, and especially Oliver Cromwell took steps in this regard during the Republican period. Cromwell allowed Jews to return to Palestine and build synagogues.

Although the emergence of 'Christian Zionism' predates Jewish Zionism by half a century, it did not become widespread until the 1990s. Stephen Spector states that the first use of the term was in the early years of the 20th century, in the obituary in the New York Times and letters to the editor. Nahum Sokolow used the term in 1919 in his *History of Zionism* and Claude Duvernoy in 1967 in *Le Prince et le Prophete*, which provides a bibliography of Christian Zionist publications.¹⁸ Walter Riggans, Bishop of the Church of Scotland, defined a Christian Zionist in a very inclusive way as any Christian who supported

¹⁸ Stephen Spector, *Evangelicals and Israel: The Story of American Christian Zionism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 2; H. Şule Albayrak, "ABD'de Hıristiyan Siyonizmi: Kökeni, İnanç Esasları ve Günümüz Amerikan Siyasetine Etkisi", *Darulfunun İlahiyat* 30/1 (2019), 141-169.

the Zionist aim of establishing the state, army, government and other institutions of Israel and added that this definition could apply to any Christian who supports Israel for any reason. Moreover, the term Christian Zionist is broad enough to include liberal Protestants who sympathise with Palestinians rather than Israelis but who support the existence of a Jewish state because of their guilt over the Nazi Holocaust. Since Christian Zionism is a faith-based organisation, those who call themselves Christian Zionists have a different theology and religious interpretation from other Christians. Presbyterian minister Donald Wagner defines Christian Zionism as a religious movement within Protestant Fundamentalism that sees the modern state of Israel as the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies and, therefore, works to secure political, financial, and religious support.¹⁹

Christian Zionists interpret the Old Testament promises to the Jews as establishing of modern Zionist Israel. In a literalist reading, Christian Zionists argue that the national borders of modern Israel should encompass the area referred to as *Eretz Yisrael*. In a literalist reading of Genesis 15:18, they claim that the Golan Heights, as well as most of present-day Egypt, Lebanon, and Jordan, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and all of Palestine, are the land given to the Jewish race by God. According to Christian Zionists, all bi-communal peace initiatives, including a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, are unbiblical because they would thwart God's plan of salvation and should, therefore, be strongly discouraged. Since Israel is the only nation established by God, the Palestinians have no rights to the land. Christian Zionists believe that the establishment of a state of Israel, *Eretz Yisrael*, will be followed by the second coming of the Messiah and the establishment of the millennial Kingdom of God on earth.²⁰

Christian Zionism is a movement that was particularly influential in England in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The pioneers of Christian Zionism in England were Shaftesbury (Anthony Ashley-Cooper) (1801-1885) and William Hechler (1845-1931). Lord Shaftesbury was a politician and social reformist who lived in the first half of the 19th century. Lord Shaftesbury, one of the leading figures of the evangelical Christian movement in England, showed great interest in the Old Testament prophecies about the return of the Jewish people to their land, and in this context, as early as the 1840s, he put forward the idea that a Jewish state should be established in Palestine and Jewish settlers should immigrate to the region.²¹

William Hechler, an Anglican priest born in Germany, carried out his activities in England. He met Theodor Herzl and supported the Jewish Zionist movement. Hechler introduced Herzl to British leaders and wrote many articles supporting the idea of Zionism. Herzl writes in his diaries that Hechler opened the map of Palestine in the train compartment and showed the map of New Israel, with the northern border being the mountains overlooking Cappadocia and the southern border being the Suez Canal.²²

¹⁹ Spector, *Evangelicals and Israel*, 3.

²⁰ Carlo Aldrovandi, "Theo-Politics in the Holy Land: Christian Zionism and Jewish Religious Zionism", *Religion Compass* 5/4 (2011), 115.

²¹ Spector, *Evangelicals and Israel*, 18.

²² Clifford Attick Kiracofe, *Dark Crusade: Christian Zionism and US Foreign Policy* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, Macmillan, 2009), 95.

1.2.1. Religious Movements Preparing Christian Zionism and Apocalyptic Reviews

Until the Reformation, the concept of Israel and apocalyptic expressions in the Old Testament were read entirely from the perspective of the New Testament. This reading was based on an allegorical interpretation of apocalyptic expressions and the concept of Israel rather than a literal reading. Since the authority to understand and interpret the Bible before the Reformation belonged only to the Church, no other reading was possible other than the allegorical reading. The pre-Reformation mainstream Christianity interpreted the Old Testament words 'Abraham's seed' and 'Israel' as the 'Christian community' for the period from the coming of Jesus. The battle of Armageddon²³ took place in 70 AD, and Jesus unleashed Rome on the Jews and made them pay for what they had done to him and his disciples. When Christianity came to power, the Kingdom of God was realized.²⁴

When Martin Luther first began to express his reformist ideas, he used positive expressions for the Jews, reminded them that Jesus was a Jew, and even wrote an article on *Dass Jesus Christus ein geborener Jude sei* ('On Jesus Christ born as a Jew'). In this article, the oppression of the Jews by the Papacy and the Catholic world was condemned, and it was recommended to treat them more compassionately. According to Luther, the Jews have been deeply and long deluded by their extreme delusion that God cannot be a man. Therefore, they must be dealt with carefully. Luther hopes that even if they are treated well, they will become good Christians.²⁵

However, when he could not find what he hoped from the Jews, he turned against them in time, and years later, he wrote a handbook named *Über die Juden und ihre Lügen* (*On the Jews and their Lies*) that would later be used by the Nazis during Jewish prosecutions. In this article, Luther wrote about how they, as Christ-killers, were slanderers and liars about Christ and Mary and how they acted contrary to God's plan of salvation.²⁶ He recommended burning their synagogues and schools, confiscating their property, forcing them to give up their trade, which is nothing more than usury, and forcing them to make a living with a pair of sticks like other people.²⁷

However, with Protestantism, there was a growing tendency to literal interpretation of Old Testament readings and Hebrew. The process that began with the Protestant Reformation evolved in a completely different direction with Britain's imperial policies and interests.

²³ According to the Book of Revelation, the last book of the New Testament, Armageddon is a place prophesied where armies will gather for a final battle in the end times. It is interpreted in various ways as either a literal or symbolic location. The term is also used more generally to refer to any end-of-the-world scenario. In the Old Testament, Megiddo is mentioned twelve times, with ten of those references referring to the ancient city of Megiddo and two to the "Valley of Megiddo," likely meaning simply "the plain near the city. Due to the relative symbolic and even cryptic language of this New Testament passage, some Christian scholars conclude that Armageddon must be an idealized place. In Megiddo, there are no mountains, only the plains of Megiddo. Some academics, including C.C. Torrey, Kline, and Jordan, suggest that the word is derived from the Hebrew word "moed" (מועד), meaning "assembly" or "meeting." (Please see., "Christian Zionism: The Real Threat to The World Peace *Salaam One*, (Accessed January 15, 2024).

²⁴ Aldrovandi, "Theo-Politics in the Holy Land", 115.

²⁵ Martin Luther, "Dass Jesus Christus ein geborner Jude sei", 1523 WA 11, 314-336, hier: 325-333; See, Hakan Olgun, *Sekülerliğin Teolojik Kurgusu Protestanlık* (İstanbul: Milet Nihal Yayınları, 2019), 298-299.

²⁶ Martin Luther, *Über die Juden und ihre Lügen*, (München: Deutscher Volksverlag 1940), 68-77.

²⁷ Luther, *Über die Juden und ihre Lügen*, 339; Olgun, *Sekülerliğin teolojik Kurgusu Protestanlık*, 300-301.

Supporters of Zionism are less widespread among evangelical churches, which show more respect for the work of the United Nations, support for human rights, the rule of international law, and empathy with the Palestinians. Pew Research Centre figures show that support for Zionism reaches 63 percent among white evangelicals. Christian Zionism is widespread in mainstream American evangelical, charismatic, and independent denominations, including the Assemblies of God, Pentecostals, and Southern Baptists, as well as in most independent megachurches.²⁸

In the history of Christian theology, theologians have put forward three alternative proposals for interpreting Revelation 20:1-10²⁹ and speculating on the meaning of the millennium. Postmillennialism refers to a literal or symbolic millennial period of a thousand years in which the Church triumphs over evil before Christ returns. Premillennialism is the doctrine that Christ will return to deliver the Church from evil and then reign on earth for a thousand years.³⁰ As for Amillennialism, it is a Christian eschatological view that rejects the idea of a literal thousand-year reign of Christ on Earth, and they claim that thousand years in Revelation 20:1-10 should be understood symbolically. They claim that the millennium has already begun and coincides with the current church age. The reign of Christ or the Heavenly Kingdom during this period should be spiritual, not physical. Toward the end of the world Christ will return for final judgment and the permanent reign in a new heaven and a new Earth will begin.³¹

According to the post-millennialist understanding that the Messiah would come to earth after the realization of the kingdom of God, it was necessary to prepare the world for the coming of Christ by spreading Christianity as much as possible in the world before the coming of Christ. During the nineteenth century, Protestant missionaries tried to spread Christianity all over the world. Their success initially encouraged evangelicals. The new problems of industrialization and urbanization, the slave trade, the American Civil War, the idea that the world was not getting any better and that, therefore, the kingdom of God could not have been established on earth until today, and that it would be established in the future

²⁸ “Middle East Monitor: Christian Zionism- The New Heresy that Undermines Middle East Peace (By Revd Dr Stephen Sizer)-Dci”, (Accessed January 16, 2024).

²⁹ The verses related to this subject are as follows: ¹And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. ²He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. ³He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time. ⁴I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They[a] had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. ⁵(The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. ⁶Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years. ⁷When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—and to gather them for battle. In number, they are like the sand on the seashore. ⁹They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God’s people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. ¹⁰And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night forever and ever. (Revelation 20:1-10).

³⁰ Sizer, *Christian Zionism*, 28.

³¹ Anthony A. Hoekema, “Amillennialism”, *Monergism, Search the Directory of Theology*.

after Christ's bodily descent to earth, that is, the idea of premillennialism, began to gain weight. Dispensationalism and premillennialism were reinterpreted and took their place in the agenda of Christian Zionists.³²

After Premillennial Dispensationalism became popular among Christian Zionists, those who believed that the return of the Jews to Jerusalem was a divine sign confirming their dispensationalist understanding of the Bible now formed the majority. For them, the establishment of the modern state of Israel in 1948 signaled the end of history. The political turmoil in the Middle East against Israel is part of God's plan of salvation. This will be followed by Armageddon, which will culminate in the second coming of Christ. Finally, the millennial Kingdom of the Messiah will begin.³³

Thomas Brightman (d. 1607), described as the father of the doctrine of the gathering of all Jews in Palestine, predicted the imminent conversion of the Jewish people to Christianity (not to mention the murder of two-thirds of them). In his *Apocalypsis Apocalypseos*, he claimed that the seven bowls³⁴ mentioned in the Book of Revelation began with Elizabeth's accession to the throne in 1558 and that the seventh trumpet of Revelation 10 was sounded in 1588 with the destruction of the Spanish Armada. Brightman also prophesied that the alliance between the Roman Catholic Church, which he saw as the Antichrist³⁵, and the Ottoman Empire, which he saw as a false prophet, would be destroyed, and then the Jews would be called to become a Christian nation, and the world would be at peace.³⁶

1.2.2. Apocalyptic Dispensationalism

One of the essential components of Christian Zionist theology is Dispensationalism. *Dispensation* means the power of disposition, the act of distributing, as well as the relaxation of the law in certain exceptional cases. The Latin *dispensatio* is used in the sense of administration and remuneration and is derived from the verb *dispensare*, 'to distribute, to administer'. In theology, the term refers to 'the method or scheme by which God develops his purposes and reveals himself to men' (late 14th century) or 'a particular period during which a religious system prevails' (1640's).³⁷

³² See, Mustafa Bıyık, "Amerikan Protestan Fundamentalizmi'nin Köken ve Öğretisi Açısından Bir Analizi, *Dini Araştırmalar* 10/28 (2007), 88-89.

³³ Asena Acar, *Christian Zionism and Doctrinal Islamophobia: Expediting the End Times* (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois, Master Thesis, 2020), 3-4.

³⁴ In the Book of Revelation, there is a prophecy describing the signs of the apocalypse using the images of seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls. Seven angels are commanded to pour out seven bowls, the first on the earth, the second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, the third angel his bowl on the rivers and water, the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the Euphrates River, and the seventh angel poured out his bowl on the air. (Revelation, 16:1-21).

³⁵ Although the issue of who the Antichrist is and from whom he will emerge varies according to historical-political events, the view that the Antichrist will emerge from the Jews is dominant in traditional Christian belief. According to the church fathers such as Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Origenes, Chrysostom, Hieronymus, and Augustine, the Antichrist will come from the Jews. The claim that the Antichrist will come from the Jewish tribe of Dan is based on some statements of the Old Testament Books such as Daniel, 11:17; Genesis, 49:17; Deuteronomy, 33:22; Jeremiah, 8:16 and Revelation. 7:4-8. See, Mustafa Bıyık, "Hristiyan Eskatolojisinde Deccal ve Yecüc Mecüc Kavramları Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme", *Hitit Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 6/11 (2007), 57.

³⁶ Sizer, *Christian Zionism*, 28.

³⁷ The article "Dispensation", *Online Etymology Dictionary*.

The theology of dispensationalism divides human history into seven periods, each period being interpreted in terms of divine intervention. Each period signifies some change in God's way of dealing with mankind. After God judges and closes each period, He begins a new one. Each period ends in a catastrophe, and a new period begins. The first period is called the Period of Innocence and includes the time when Adam and Eve lived in paradise. The second period is called the Period of Consciousness, which began with the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise and continued until the Flood of Noah. The third period is the Period of Human Power, which began after Noah's Flood. The fourth period is the Period of Promise, which began with the Prophecy of Abraham and ended with the Exodus of the Jewish people from Egypt. The fifth period is the Mosaic Dispensation, which began with the Exodus from Egypt and ended with the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The sixth period is called the Period of Grace and began with the New Covenant of Christ. It will end with the Rapture of Christ's true followers near the end of time. The seventh and final period is Christ's millennial kingdom of God on earth.³⁸

Each of these periods represents a change of method in the divine plan of salvation and a new test for mankind. The sixth period, the period of Grace, also known as the Church Age, is the present period and not yet the period of the kingdom of God. The kingdom that dispensationalists expect will not be realized in the natural course of history and following the laws of nature, as the classical premillennialists understand it, but in a miraculous, supernatural way through God's intervention.³⁹

There are two common approaches to how Christian Zionists generally justify their support for the Land of Israel (*Eretz Yisrael*). The first approach is based on the statement found in Genesis 12:3: '*I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you, and through you, all the peoples of the earth will be blessed*'. This statement has caused great controversy among both Christians and non-Christians. According to Antizionist Christians the Zionist Jews arrogantly misinterpreted the context of this biblical statement and Christian Zionists ignorantly accepted this misinterpretation.⁴⁰

The second approach to participation in Zionist ideology is 'based on dispensationalist theology' and states that 'we are living in the end times.' Understanding that we are in the last times, according to the biblical Book of Revelation, essentially means that the return of the Messiah depends on the occurrence of a series of events, among which is the existence of the State of Israel.

Dispensationalist theology is a theology that provides a roadmap for the Christian Zionist movement. According to Tony Campolo, a 19th-century Anglican clergyman named John Nelson Darby (d. 1882), who emigrated from England to the USA, played a major role in the creation of dispensationalist theology. Although Darby is a little-known theologian, his theology has greatly influenced today's Christian Right movement. According to Campolo, 'without analyzing dispensationalist understanding, it is almost

³⁸ Albayrak, "Tarihi ve Sosyal Bir Realite Olarak Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nde Gelişen Protestan Fundamentalizmi", 132; Bıyık, "Amerikan Protestan Fundamentalizmi'nin Köken ve Öğretisi açısından bir Analizi, 89-90; "What are the seven dispensations?" *Your Questions, Biblical Answers*, (Accessed May 07, 2024).

³⁹ Bıyık, "Amerikan Protestan Fundamentalizmi'nin Köken ve Öğretisi Açısından Bir Analizi", 90.

⁴⁰ Anderson, Andrea, "Improbable Alliances in Uncertain Times: Christian Zionism and the Israeli Right", M. Tobin et al (eds.), in *How Long O Lord* (Cambridge: Cowley, 2002), 77-104.

impossible to understand how he dominated American evangelicalism and how much he influenced the course of US policy in the Middle East'.⁴¹

Although Nelson Darby made the most significant contribution to the establishment of dispensationalist theology, another influential figure in the spread of dispensationalist theology in the 19th century was Cyrus Ingerson Scofield (d. 1843). In 1909, Scofield published his translation of the Bible, *the Scofield Reference Bible*. This Bible is one of the most important sources used by early dispensationalists to propagate their theology.⁴² In fact, according to Campolo, it is 'the most famous scripture study text ever published.'⁴³

One of Scofield's core teachings was the theology of the 'Rapture.' The rapture refers to the dispensationalist belief that God will take all true believers from the earth before the coming of Christ and that this will occur either before or after Christ or during the reign of the Antichrist. Dispensationalists believe this will occur without warning. All true followers of God will instantly disappear, and their souls will ascend to heaven, while unbelievers will be left behind. Scofield often spoke of the rapture in his sermons and told his listeners that the present situation also gave signs that this prophecy would be fulfilled.⁴⁴

Despite the spiritual equality between Christians and Jews as defined by progressive dispensationalism, there are still functional differences between the groups. Progressive dispensationalism does not see the Church in this period as the same as the State of Israel and considers a different identity and function for ethnic Israel in the future millennial kingdom.⁴⁵

Dispensationalist theology has experienced a great revival among mainstream Christians in the United States due to the current state of instability in the Middle East, to the point where many believe that this situation is a prerequisite for the return of Christ. Dispensationalist theory has enjoyed considerable favor among mainstream Christians, who have become convinced of this theology through the best-selling left-wing novel series *Left Behind* and other popular literature on Dispensationalist theology. Books on Dispensationalist theology have had a major influence on American political thought. In a review of the *Left Behind* series, Gershom Gorenberg writes: '*The Left Behind* books offer millions of people a paradigm of interpretation in which extreme views appear plausible. Propaganda disguised as fiction captures our attention'⁴⁶. The *Left Behind* series is the most famous example of contemporary libertarianism, and *Left Behind* authors Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins (1996) describe themselves as Dispensationalist Christian Zionists. The *Left Behind* series depicts 'clerical' scenarios and the chaos that ensues after the true Christian has escaped to heaven. Although such books are classified as fiction, readers of this series are subtly taught Dispensationalist theologies.

⁴¹ Tony Campolo, "The Ideological Roots of Christian Zionism", *Tikkun* 20/1 (2005), 19.

⁴² See, Cyrus Scofield, *The Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1909).

⁴³ Campolo, "The Ideological Roots of Christian Zionism", 19.

⁴⁴ Broenfeld, "Strange Bedfellows: The Jewish Establishment and the Christian Right", *WRMEA* (2009), 72; see, Bıyık, "Amerikan Protestan Fundamentalizmi'nin Köken ve Öğretisi Açısından Bir Analizi", 99-100.

⁴⁵ Charles Ryrie, "Update on Dispensationalism", *Issues In Dispensationalism*, eds. Master and Wesley R. Willis (Chicago: Moody 1994), 20.

⁴⁶ Gershom Gorenberg, "Intolerance: The Bestseller. Rev. of *Left Behind* series, by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins", in *American Prospect* (September 23, 2002), 45.

Dispensationalists believe that a 3.5-year period of false peace, characterised as a period of ‘hated abomination’, will be followed by the beginning of the ascension. This period is described in Daniel 8 as the time of the ram and the goat. Daniel 8:13-14 describes the message revealed to the prophet Daniel as follows. ‘Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to him, “How long will this vision last, the vision of the daily offering, of the rebellion that brings destruction, of the trampling underfoot of the holy place and of the army?” And the holy one said unto me, 2 300 evenings and mornings, and then shall the holy place be restored. Dispensationalists believe that the 3.5-year period of false peace that follows the ‘hated abomination’ is a period of war, famine, and disease. According to them, this hated period of false peace will be followed by a period of ‘Great Catastrophe’. It is believed that during the Great Tribulation, the world will be completely taken over by the Antichrist. In Revelation 13, the anti-Christ, the Antichrist, will announce the number 666 and call all people to duty. Dispensationalists believe that the Antichrist will enjoy great popularity worldwide and that anyone who opposes him will be ostracised from their society.⁴⁷

Dispensationalist theology has become not only a personal belief but also a political endeavor/issue for some Christian Zionists. Dispensationalists believe that during the ‘Great Tribulation’⁴⁸, 144,000 Jews will be converted to Christianity and that this conversion will reveal to them the true intentions of the Antichrist. These 144,000 converted Jews⁴⁹ will be the central element in the spread of the Christian faith to the unbelievers who have not ascended to heaven. Furthermore, these 144,000 Jews who embrace the Christian faith will meet and single-handedly defeat the Antichrist in the final battle known as Armageddon.⁵⁰ After this battle, the seven-year tribulation period will end, after which Jesus will return to defeat and imprison Satan and establish the millennial Messianic Kingdom on Earth.⁵¹

Hal Lindsey, who has written several works on dispensationalist thought, is most notable for his use of current political situations to explain how the last days will unfold. Lindsey’s 1970 work, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, which specifically relates contemporary events to the end times, emphasizes that the present European Union, then known as the European Economic Community (EEC), represents the 10-horned beast mentioned in the Book of Revelation and that this 10-horned beast could prepare the way for the Antichrist to take political and economic control of the world.⁵² According to Haija, Lindsey must have despaired when the EEC later cooperated with the European Free Trade Union (EFTU), resulting in the present European Union.⁵³ Indeed, Lindsey made many other predictions that did not come true, such as the prediction that the rapture would take place, which has been repeatedly fulfilled since Israel became a state.⁵⁴ Although none of his predictions have come true, Lindsey has retained his reputation among dispensationalists and has a significant

⁴⁷ Rammy M. Haija, “The Armageddon Lobby: Dispensationalist Christian Zionism and the Shaping of US Policy Towards Israel-Palestine”, *Holy Land Studies: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 5/1, May 2006, 83

⁴⁸ See, Revelation, 7:4

⁴⁹ See, Revelation, 7:14

⁵⁰ Halsell, *Forcing God’s Hand*, 80.

⁵¹ Haija, “The Armageddon Lobby: Dispensationalist Christian Zionism and the Shaping of US Policy Towards Israel-Palestine”, 84

⁵² Hal Lindsay, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Michigan: Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1980), 184-185.

⁵³ Haija, “The Armageddon Lobby: Dispensationalist Christian Zionism and the Shaping of US Policy Towards Israel-Palestine”, 84.

⁵⁴ See, Lindsay, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, 137.

following through his television programmes broadcast by the *Trinity Broadcasting Network* (TBN), the Dispensationalist broadcasting network.

Explaining all of the colonisation and genocide practices from the establishment of Israel to the present day by staying within the framework of how the eschatological statements in the Judeo-Christian Holy Texts should be understood in one way or another may cause some other important issues to be overlooked. It should not be overlooked that British imperialism and the Puritans had strategic aims against the Catholic Church and the Ottoman Empire. The Puritan theologians and politicians in Britain, who were afraid of the military power of the Ottoman Empire and the Papacy, believed that the British victory over the Ottomans and the Papacy would come after the conquest of Palestine by the Jews. Therefore, when analysing the Puritans' support for the Jews, it should not be overlooked that the issue is not only a matter of interpretation of religious texts but also that the US and Britain saw the Jews as strategic allies against the Ottomans and the Papacy, that is, against Catholics and Muslims.

This alliance could also be a reasonable answer to why Britain, which had been trying for centuries to take Jerusalem from the Muslims, gave it to the Jews and withdrew. The only way to make the Jews forget the persecution that had been inflicted on them for centuries and to make them stop being enemies of the persecutors and become loyal allies with plenty of money would have been to give them Palestine as a gift. It was also a way to turn the Jews, who had been persecuted by Christians for centuries, against the Muslims who had treated them with compassion.

2. The Influence of Christian Zionists on the Middle East Policy of the USA

Although the Christian Zionist lobby constitutes a group of 10-15% among US Christians, it is a fact that this group is quite successful in creating a pro-Israel electorate among American voters and influencing American politics in favor of Israel through the literalist understanding of the Bible and dispensationalist doctrine they advocate and with the support of the Israel lobby. The Christian Zionists in the USA, also known as the 'Armageddon Lobby' and 'Christian AIPAC', support Israel's decades-long massacre policy against the Palestinian people under all circumstances and conditions and even shape American policy in this regard. After the 7 October Hamas raid on the Al-Aqsa Flood, US Secretary of State Blinken traveled to Israel and said, 'I am here as a Jew' and supported Israel's massacre of Palestinian civilians it seems.⁵⁵

Towards the end of the 1970s, Israel tried to improve its image in the international arena without compromising its occupied territories and its occupation policy. Israel gained significant international support by joining the Camp David Peace Accords with Egypt in 1978. However, United Nations Resolution 3379 of 1975 placed Israel in a disadvantageous position in the international arena, defining Zionism as a form of racism and discrimination. During this period, the Christian Right officially gained strength in the US, while Jewish organizations sought to increase their influence and image at the international level by allying with Christian Zionists in the US. The Christian Right's commitment to the State of Israel and its strong American presence attracted the attention of Israeli interest groups. Aware of

⁵⁵ Romesh Ratnesar, "The Right's New Crusade", *Time* (Accessed May 06, 2002). 26; see, Samuel Goldman, *God's Country: Christian Zionism in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 10-11.

the diversity of their social and religious views, Jewish political organizations saw an alliance with Christian Zionists as a critical element to ensure and maintain a positive image of Israel in US politics and the American mainstream. Initially, Jewish-American leaders opposed an alliance with the Christian Right, seeing the movement as a potential rival.⁵⁶

However, these concerns quickly dissipated when the Christian Right was officially established and became an influential political bloc in the United States. Zionist groups realized that an alliance with this bloc would be beneficial to their political interests. In the late 1970s, there was growing discontent among conservative Christians in the United States about the lack of political mobilization of their constituency. They felt that their agenda could be better implemented from a recognized institution than the one they were being offered. Therefore, in 1979, the Reverend Jerry Falwell founded an organization called the ‘Moral Majority’ with the aim of mobilizing the Christian church on behalf of moral and social issues and encouraging the participation of people of faith in the political process. The Moral Majority movement quickly became a household name. Through charismatic preachers, the organization mobilized thousands of churches and millions of registered voters to form a Christian political bloc, the so-called Christian Right. When political strategists began to analyze how important the Christian Right was for American politics, they discovered that it was the largest social movement in the United States and constituted the largest group of voters within the Republican Party.⁵⁷

In response to an Israeli-funded visit to the Holy Land in 1979, in addition to a growing Jewish settlement near the city of Nablus, Falwell stated that ‘God had done America a favor because America had done the Jews a favor’.⁵⁸

Just a few months after the founding of the Moral Majority, Falwell and long-time evangelist Billy Graham were invited to a gala dinner in New York City by Menahem Begin, then Likud leader and Prime Minister of Israel. The occasion was the presentation of the Jabotinsky Centenary Medal, named after the right-wing Zionist leader Vladimir Jabotinsky. The medal is an award recognizing a person as a lifelong friend of the nation and is given by the State of Israel.⁵⁹ That year, the inaugural medals were awarded to Jerry Falwell and Billy Graham. This was a clear indication that these two men were recognized as staunch supporters of Israel. These awards were, in fact, a clear indication of the beginning of the official alliance between the Christian Right and Israel.

Interestingly, during this inauguration ceremony, reports surfaced that Israeli Prime Minister Begin gave Jerry Falwell a Learjet as a present on behalf of the State of Israel. Grace Halsell, in an interview in which she gave extensive information about the Moral Majority, said the following: ‘*I have documented that Israel gave Jerry Falwell a jet plane, which was a beautiful gift, and I can safely say that he used it politically, not only to get around but also to show strong support for Israel’s Palestinian policy. While traveling with Falwell, I heard him thanking the Israeli leader Moshe Arens.*’⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Broenfeld, “Strange Bedfellows” (Accessed July 22, 2009), 71.

⁵⁷ Berlet Chip- Jean Hardisty, “Exporting Right-Wing Christianity”, See, Biyık, “Amerikan Protestan Fundamentalizmi’nin Köken ve Öğretisi Açısından Bir Analizi”, 96.

⁵⁸ Broenfeld, “Strange Bedfellows”, 71.

⁵⁹ Andrea Anderson, Improbable Alliances in Uncertain Times: Christian Zionism and the Israeli Right’, in *How Long O Lord*, eds. M. Tobin et al. (Cambridge: Cowley), 77.

⁶⁰ Halsell, *Forcing God’s Hand*, 100-101.

The Jabotinsky Centenary Medal and the Learjet led to a strong relationship between Begin and Falwell, which later became essential to the Israeli Prime Minister. In 1981, when Israel unilaterally bombed Iraq's nuclear reactor, Begin immediately called Jerry Falwell to ask American Christians to support Israel's action. Falwell used his organization as a vehicle to promote Israel's political interests. In 1985, the National Christian Leadership Conference for Israel (NCLCI), an organization affiliated with the Moral Majority, launched a campaign to repeal United Nations Resolution 3379, spearheaded by Franklin Littell.⁶¹

The alliance between the Christian Zionists and the pro-Israel lobby of the United States was the cause of the Israeli civilian massacre in Gaza on the morning of 7 October 2023, after thousands of rockets fired by the Kassam Brigades, the armed wing of Hamas, penetrated Israel's so-called Iron Dome defense system.

2.1. Propaganda Tools and Activities of Christian Zionists

According to Grace Halsell, Christian Zionists have made it their roadmap to support every action taken by Israel as God's will and to turn a blind eye to actions that seem unjust and cruel. Dale Crowley, a Washington-based religious broadcaster, describes dispensational Christian Zionism as a cult, even 'the fastest growing cult in America.' Members of this sect of middle-class Americans donate millions of dollars every week and read the books of Hal Lindsey and Tim LaHaye, television evangelists who explain the foundations of the sect. Their sole purpose is to facilitate their journey to heaven, free from all troubles, where they will watch the hand of God, Armageddon, and the destruction of planet Earth.⁶²

Estimates of the size of Christian Zionism vary widely. Critics such as Crowley claim that at least one in 10 Americans is pro-Israel, while advocates such as Robertson and Falwell claim to have the support of 100 million Americans with whom they communicate every week. Dale Crowley estimates that the number of pro-Israel Christians in America is 'between 25 and 30 million' and growing. Robert Boston, for example, in his biography of Pat Robertson, argues that with an annual budget of \$25 million and over 1.7 million members, the Christian Coalition is 'arguably the most influential political organization in the US'. The National Unity Coalition for Israel brings together 200 different Jewish and Christian Zionist organizations, including the International Christian Embassy, the Christian Fellowship, and others who support Israel's position against Israel.⁶³

2.2. Israel's Colonisation Policies and Christian Zionists

It is worth noting the dreams of some Christian Zionists that extend beyond Israel. *Just as the early Christian Zionists encouraged European Jews to go to Palestine and take as much land as they could, so today Christian Zionists such as Jerry Falwell urge Jews to go beyond Palestine and take over all Arab lands from the Euphrates in the east to the Nile in the west,*' says Halsell.⁶⁴

⁶¹ "Mainline American Christian 'Peacemakers' against Israel", *Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs*.

⁶² Sizer, *Christian Zionism*, 15-16.

⁶³ Sizer, *Christian Zionism*, 19-20.

⁶⁴ Broenfeld, "Strange Bedfellows", 71-72

Despite their Christian roots, Christian Zionists deny the Palestinians the right to an independent homeland and oppose Israel's withdrawal to pre-1967 war borders and the ceding of land in return for peace. Like many fanatical Jews, Christian Zionists argue that Israel's claim to sovereignty over the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights, Jerusalem, and, of course, the Haram al-Sharif is divinely ordained. Moreover, they loudly claim that Israel has divine authorization to rule over much more land. Basing this claim on Genesis 17:4-8, they assert that God promised Abraham a land extending from the Nile River in Egypt to Israel, Palestine, and Jordan, and from part of Saudi Arabia to the Euphrates River.

Millions of American evangelical Christians believe that the territories occupied in 1967 should belong to the Jews because God miraculously helped them conquer them. In addition, their Bible-based programs argue that there will be no talk of a Palestinian state or any peace in the region until Jesus makes his 'Second Coming' and establishes his millennial reign of peace on earth.⁶⁵ Moreover, in these programs, it is stated that Jerusalem as a whole will be the capital of Israel and that the Jewish Temple, the Temple of Solomon, will be rebuilt in place of Al-Aqsa Mosque, which will be demolished. According to evangelical Christian Zionists, with the completion of the Temple, a European diplomat, the secretary general of the United Nations, or an Iraqi Antichrist will emerge. During the seven years of the Tribulation, or *Jacob's Trouble* (tribulation), the Antichrist will create a series of catastrophes on a cosmic scale. The Antichrist's demand that the Jews worship him in the Temple will initiate the Battle of Armageddon. All Christians will be slaughtered in this conflagration, including two-thirds of all Jews who, until then, had refused to accept Christ as their savior. During this war, after the Second Coming of Christ and his subsequent victory over the Antichrist, the Kingdom of God will be established on earth, which will last for a thousand years, and Christ will rule the whole world in his Divine Kingdom with Jerusalem as its capital.⁶⁶

James Mountain Inhofe, an American politician from the Republican Party who served as Senator of Oklahoma from 1994 to 2023, has argued that it is not necessary to support Israel and oppose the land arrangements because Israel has a right to the land. Because this is what God intended. Inhofe, who claims that God promised Abraham that all the land promised to Abraham would belong to his descendants, cites Genesis 13:14-15 and argues that the Zionist occupation of the land in Palestine and its opening to Jewish settlers is not a political event, but a struggle over whether God's word is accurate.⁶⁷

2.3. Initial Gains of the Christian Right-Wing

Littell was one of the founders of the contemporary 'Israel Above All' ideology espoused by Falwell. In the 1950s and early 1960s, when France was Israel's strongest ally and primary arms supplier, Littell became concerned for the state of Israel. It was widely recognized that France's relationship with Israel was aimed at maintaining control over the Suez Canal in

⁶⁵ Clark, *Allies for Armageddon*, 3.

⁶⁶ Clark, *Allies for Armageddon*, 3.

⁶⁷ Samuel Goldman, *God's Country: Christian Zionism in America*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 9-10.

Egypt.⁶⁸ Littell believed that the security of the State of Israel required an unconditional alliance based on a religious basis and not on political motivations. Littell was committed to using his influence as a Christian leader to support the State of Israel and to foster this unconditional alliance. In the immediate aftermath of the Six-Day War in June 1967, Littell founded an organization called Christians Concerned for Israel (CCI) with the aim of ‘reviving the pro-Israel spirit’ in Mainstream Protestant Churches. At the time, Littell and his organization were only a tiny minority. In the mainstream Protestant and Catholic churches, support for the Palestinian cause had grown, especially among the leadership. Littell saw this as a threat to Israel and wanted CCI to expand to help stop this growing trend.⁶⁹

UN Resolution 3379 was first presented at the Conference of Foreign Ministers of Non-Aligned Countries in Lima, Peru, in August 1975 (United Nations 1975: 84). The resolution was presented to the UN General Assembly two months later, but the focus was not exclusively on Israel; only the last nine words of this 450-word resolution are about Israel. The resolution was intended to condemn racism and discrimination by UN member states. Christian Zionists vigorously objected to UN Resolution 3379, but after its adoption by the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly, Israeli efforts to have it canceled seemed futile.⁷⁰

The adoption of this resolution was followed by a protracted effort by Israeli lobby groups to put pressure on the UN. However, these efforts proved ineffective. When the Christian Right lobby joined the effort, the authorities in Washington began to respond to the pressure. Christian Right organizations encouraged their constituents to write to their congressmen and demand that they support the cancellation of the resolution. During the 1985 Feast of Tabernacles, a vigorous campaign was waged against the resolution. Participants were given leaflets entitled ‘Danger at the UN’ and were told that the resolution was not only Zionist but also anti-Semitic. On 23 January 1990, a group of Congress representatives introduced Resolution 457, calling the UN to cancel Resolution 3379. According to Resolution 457, Zionism is a national movement for the self-determination of the Jewish people and is considered a legal and moral aspiration characteristic of many national groups in the modern world. Therefore, UN General Assembly Resolution 3379 was intended to remove the legitimacy of the State of Israel. Then, US President George H.W. Bush supported the Assembly resolution, which was adopted. On 3 May 1990, a similar resolution, Senate Joint Resolution 246, was proposed by Senator George Mitchell and passed unanimously.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Gil Chaya, “Why Is France Allowing Hate Messages on TV?” *Chicago Daily Herald*, (Accessed December 06, 2004), 12.

⁶⁹ See, David Blewett, ‘Christian Support for Israel’ (Accessed in January 2003).

⁷⁰ H. J. Resolution 457, *Congressional Reference Records, 101st United States Congress* (Accessed January 23, 1990), 9.

⁷¹ Please see, Aaron Jacob, “The Zionism: Racism Lie Isn’t Over” *AJC Global Voice* (Accessed May 07, 2024); “Fighting Delegitimization: The United Nation’s “Zionism Is Racism” Resolution, a Case Study” (Accessed May 07, 2024); Please see, Sidney Liskofsky, “UN Resolution on Zionism”, *The American Jewish Year Book* 77 (1977), 97-126.

3. Reactions to Christian Zionism

3.1. Reactions from the Jews

One of the Jewish groups vehemently opposed to Zionism and the usurpation of Arab lands is Neturei Karta (נטורי קרתא in Aramaic). Neturei Karta leaders regularly participate in protests against Israel, intending to give them a sincere Jewish face. In interviews and at events they organize, they describe Israel as a Nazi state and compare the Zionist State of Israel to a cancer. They do not hesitate to use violent rhetoric against Zionists. Neturei Karta's main point of departure is the idea that Judaism and Zionism are not the same thing, and that Zionism has nothing to do with true Judaism. The movement's leaders claim that if a Jew supports Zionism, their Jewish identity is fundamentally undermined. In July 2010, Neturei Karta members chanted, 'Netanyahu is not a Jew!' during Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's speech at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York. Neturei Karta leaders participate in anti-Israel programs and events on university campuses. They also take part as Jewish representatives in multi-faith events organized by pro-Palestinian student groups in 'dialogue' events on Israel-Palestine.⁷² Rabbi Israel Domb, one of the leading clergymen of this movement, argued that the Torah in Kesubos 111a⁷³ instructed its believers 'not to land in the Holy Land in groups by force' and that the present state of Israel was established without God's authorization.⁷⁴ Christian Zionists see Genesis 12:3 as a message from God to the Jews of Old Testament times. Christian Zionists, therefore, take this premise of faith literally, i.e., literal, in which God promises to bless those who bless his 'chosen people.'⁷⁵

According to Rabbi W. Günther Plaut (d. 2012), the status of the chosen people in the Torah is not unconditional. Israel must uphold its side of the covenant and fulfil the terms of the covenant. What is expressed in the Bible is the promise that if the Israelites faithfully obey God and honor His covenant, they will be superior to others. It is not an inherent superiority. Through Israel, God has promised to bless the nations of the world. God has fulfilled His promises to the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) and will continue to do so. The nation of Israel is still loved because of God's promises to the fathers, but this does not include the unsaved, blasphemous, arrogant, hateful Jews.⁷⁶

Prophecies relate to future events that will occur according to God's plan. God's Will is not dependent on men to carry out His plans; they try to take God's work into their own hands, which may be contrary to His Will. Since interpreting scripture and prophecy is an error-prone human endeavour, any action that would undermine peace, safety and security must not be permitted.⁷⁷

⁷² "Naturei Carta", *Anti-Defamation League* (Accessed May 07, 2024), <https://www.adl.org/resources/backgroundner/neturei-karta>, For the ideas and activities of this movement, see, <https://nkusa.org>.

⁷³ Koren Steinsaltz, "Ketubot 111a1", *The William Davidson Talmud* (Accessed May 07, 2024), <https://www.sefaria.org/Ketubot.111a.1?lang=bi>

⁷⁴ Rammy M Haija, "The Armageddon Lobby: Dispensationalist Christian Zionism and the Shaping of US Policy Towards Israel-Palestine", *Holy Land Studies: A Multidisciplinary Journal* 56/1 (2006), 80; Rabbi Israel Domb / Neturi Karta -Jews United Against Zionism, -Originally aired 1989 (Accessed May 07, 2024).

⁷⁵ Anderson, "Improbable Alliances in Uncertain Times", 77-104.

⁷⁶ "Christian Zionism: The Real Threat to The World Peace | Salaam One" (Accessed January 15, 2024).

⁷⁷ "Christian Zionism: The Real Threat to The World Peace | Salaam One".

3.2. Reactions from Non-Zionist Christians

In 1904, when Theodor Herzl asked Pope Pius X for support for a Jewish state in Palestine, the Pope stated that the Zionist movement could not be supported and emphasized that they would neither prevent nor encourage Jews to go to Jerusalem:

‘Even if the land of Jerusalem has not always been holy, it has been sanctified by the life of Christ. As head of the Church, I can say no more. The Jews did not recognize our Lord, so we cannot recognize the Jewish people. If you come to Palestine and settle your people there, we will have churches and priests ready to baptize you all. ‘Upon this answer, Herzl asked the Pope how he welcomed Jerusalem being in the hands of the Turks. The Pope answered: ‘I cannot say that I am happy with this situation. But I cannot help the Jews to get out of this situation.’⁷⁸

Recognizing the existence of a state based on the premise that the Jews were the ‘chosen people’ was contrary to one of the fundamental teachings of the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church understood the phrase ‘chosen people’ to mean ‘the Church’ and the descendants of Abraham to mean ‘believers in Jesus Christ’. Supporting the movement of Jews to Palestine contradicted its fundamental values.

For most of the short history of the modern state of Israel, therefore, the Vatican did not maintain official diplomatic relations with the Israeli government or even recognize Israel’s right to exist. On 30 December 1993, however, the Vatican reversed this policy, officially recognizing Israel and opened diplomatic relations. Such an action would seem to endorse the erroneous idea (an idea popular among some high-ranking Church fathers) that Jews do not have to convert and recognize Christ as the Messiah. Regardless of the prudence of this decision, the Vatican has consistently criticized Israel’s oppressive policies towards Palestinians (both Muslim and Christian).⁷⁹

Criticism of Christian Zionism has come mainly from liberal organizations such as Evangelicals (the vast majority of whom are Zionists) and the World Council of Churches. The Middle East Council of Churches similarly rejects Christian Zionism ‘because it represents a heretical interpretation of the Bible,’ while John Stott describes them as ‘biblically accursed.’⁸⁰

In 2010, a conference organized by Bethlehem Bible College and managed by the Holy Land Trust, attended by 250 people from about 20 different countries, criticized Zionism and Israel’s occupation policies. Mitri Raheb, a Lutheran pastor from Bethlehem, stated that ‘Israel represents biblical Rome, not the people of the land’ and that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is not a Jew with legitimate ties to Israel because he ‘comes from an Eastern European tribe that converted to Judaism in the Middle Ages.’ Naim Ateek, founder of the Sabeel Ecumenical Centre for Liberation Theology in Jerusalem, told the audience that modern Israel is in the grip of a tribal understanding of God. German theologian Manfred Kohl told in the conference that the Palestinian people were subjected to the

⁷⁸ Theodor Herzl, “Audience with Pope Pius X (1904)” *Council of Centers on Christian Jewish Relations*.

⁷⁹ “Christian Zionism: The Real Threat to the World Peace | Salaam One”.

⁸⁰ Sizer, *Christian Zionism*, 15-16.

holocaust by Zionists who believed that they were God's chosen people but who, in fact, retained a tribal mentality.⁸¹

In 2006, four of the patriarchs of the Church in Jerusalem signed the Jerusalem Declaration on Christian Zionism, signed by Michel Sabbah, Roman Catholic High Priest of Jerusalem; Sveryus Melki Murad, Archbishop of the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate in Jerusalem; Riyâ Abu'l-Assal, Archbishop of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Middle East; Munîb Yûnan, Archbishop of the Lutheran Church of the Gospel in Jordan and the Holy Land, in the *Jerusalem Declaration*, declared that they regard Christian Zionist doctrines as a false teaching that distorts the message of the Bible of love and peace, and that they reject the alliance of Christian Zionist leaders and organizations with Israel and the United States.

The signatories rejected Christian Zionism's unilateral imposition of pre-emptive borders on Palestine, which has led to an endless cycle of violence that threatens the security of all peoples in the Middle East and the world at large. The Patriarchs emphasized that Christian Zionists pursue a policy based on racial discrimination and warmongering, doomed to Armageddon, instead of the universal principles of love, liberation, and peace.

Noting that Palestine has been transformed into impoverished ghettos surrounded by Israeli apartheid policies and private settlements, the Patriarchs called on Christians around the world to pray for the Palestinian and Israeli peoples who are victims of occupation and militarism. They also expressed their support for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state and their opposition to the construction of illegal settlements and the Separation Wall, which threaten peace and security in the region.⁸²

Dr. James R. Graham, an educator, and theologian serving in the Chinese mission to China, has subjected the Scofield Bible and the basic ideas of its author, which Christian Zionists hold in their hands, to severe criticism from the point of view of the basic teachings of Christianity.⁸³

Graham Scofield's method of biblical exegesis destroys the fundamental principle of the Gospel, first and foremost, of God's love for all men throughout the ages, and violates the meaning of the concepts of Christ and Christianity. It does so by making Christians hostages to what contemporary Jews do or do not do. Scofield places the Jews and Israel, not Christ, at the center. The teaching that the Jewish state has priority in the sight of God makes the land of Israel a cult and places the Jewish state and its priority in the sight of God above the Church and the teaching of its head, Jesus Christ. According to Scofield, God has chosen Jews on earth and Christians in heaven. This claim is a Scofield fantasy that has no place in Scripture. Scofield speaks of an unconditional covenant between God and man. This also has no place in the Bible. Also, Scofield speaks of a secret Rapture. This Greek word for 'we will be caught up' (ἀρπαγησόμεθα from the root ἀρπάζω/harpazo)⁸⁴ is figurative. It cannot be understood in its literal sense.

⁸¹ Dexter Van Zile, "Evangelical Anti-Zionism as an Adaptive Response to Shifts in American Cultural Attitudes", *Jewish Political Studies Review* 25/1/2 (2013), 40-41.

⁸² Stephen Sizer, "Christian Zionism - The New Heresy that Undermines Middle East Peace", *Middle East Monitor*.

⁸³ Halsell, *Forcing God's Hand*, 47.

⁸⁴ Please see, I. Thessalonians 4:17. ἔπειτα ἡμεῖς οἱ ζῶντες, οἱ περιλειπόμενοι, ἅμα σὺν αὐτοῖς ἀρπαγησόμεθα ἐν νεφέλαις εἰς ἀπάντησιν τοῦ κυρίου εἰς ἄερα· καὶ οὕτως πάντοτε σὺν κυρίῳ ἐσόμεθα: After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to

While the point is resurrection, Scofield highlights the apocalypse. He goes further and says that the Messiah will return to establish a Jewish kingdom, sit on the throne in Solomon's Temple, which will be built for the third time, and preside over Old Testament-style temple worship with sacrifices of red heifers. According to Graham, that means going back to tribal law. Christ never came on such a mission. He came with a new message and is already seated on his eternal throne. His kingdom has already been fulfilled, and his mission has been completed.⁸⁵

Graham argues that Scofield and the Christian Zionists contradict the theology and fundamental dogmas of Mainstream Christianity, which has created a heretical movement outside orthodoxy by ignoring tradition and reading words in a literal sense.

Conclusion

Christian Zionists have shown varying degrees of enthusiasm in implementing the six core political beliefs that stem from their ultra-literal and fundamentalist theology. The belief that the Jews remain God's chosen people leads Christian Zionists to bless Israel. However, this has also led to a not-always-uncritical endorsement and exposure of Israel's racist and apartheid policies.

The eventual return of the Jews to Israel as God's chosen people is actively promoted by Christian Zionist Evangelicals. *New settlements should be opened, and Jewish people should be settled in these settlements so that the area described as Eretz Yisrael from the Nile to the Euphrates, as defined in the holy books, and everyone living there, especially Palestinians, should either be expelled or systematically exterminated before the eyes of the world, as has been done to the people of Gaza since 7 October 2023. Jerusalem, which is recognized as the eternal exclusive capital of the Jews, must be ensured to belong to the State of Israel as a whole, followed by the destruction of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the construction of the third Solomon's Temple. If this is done, the prophecies of both the Old Testament and the New Testament will be fulfilled, and the second coming of Jesus Christ will be possible. We would also like to emphasize the following point. While the Jews believe in the prophecy that the Temple of Solomon must be rebuilt for the Messiah to come and establish the Great Kingdom of Israel, the Dispensationalists believe in the prophecy that Israel must have the land of Palestine and that the Temple of Solomon must be rebuilt for the third time for the Messiah to come to earth again and complete his unfinished work and realize the Divine Kingdom, and for the fulfillment of this prophecy, they support the Zionist Jews and thus the state of Israel under all circumstances.*

Christian Zionists have become a danger not only for the Middle East and Muslims but also for all humanity with their great political, economic, and military power to realize their utopia based on prophecy, mythology, and war-mongering without showing the slightest interest in the discourses of reason, science, equality, democracy, freedom of opinion and peace that are in the showcase of the West and marketed to the nations of the world.

On 5 December 2023, the US Congress adopted a resolution identifying anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism with a majority of votes against the events that took place on the Israel-

meet the Lord in the air. And so, we will be with the Lord forever. (Bible Hub: Search, Read, Study the Bible in Many Languages (Bible Hub), (Accessed August 24, 2024)).

⁸⁵ Halsell, *Forcing God's Hand*, 48.

Gaza line since 7 October 2023 and the student movements protesting the genocide committed by Israel as a result.⁸⁶

After this decision failed to prevent the student demonstrations aiming to force Israel to make peace with the Palestinians, which started in essential universities in the USA in the last few weeks and spread all over the world in waves, this time the US House of Representatives passed the ‘Antisemitism Awareness Act’ on 30 April 2024, which is based on the definition of antisemitism adopted by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance and considers peaceful protests on university campuses as antisemitic.⁸⁷

This law, which would altogether abolish freedom of expression, is fuelling a dangerous process. Some members of the House of Representatives have labeled any opinion that does not support the bill and any criticism of current Israeli policies as anti-Semitic. Based on the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s definition of antisemitism, they have included even biblical statements that Jews were hostile to Jesus Christ and attempted to kill him, and according to Christians, even murdered him, within the scope of anti-Semitism.⁸⁸

In conclusion, as this study has shown in detail, Christian Zionists are not only a radical Christian group that poses a threat to Muslims; they also represent a heretical movement that is overturning traditional Judaism and Christianity and, in Hassel’s aforementioned phrase, forcing God into an apocalypse by their actions: or the consequences of their actions. Forcing God into an apocalypse means more bloodshed and tears in the world, especially in the Middle East, and ultimately makes the world a much less safe place to live. If we want our world to be a place where the principle of “living together in difference” prevails, the voices of the Christian Zionists, who are mainly rooted in Western countries, especially the USA, and who influence the current political powers, must be silenced. Indeed, the systematic oppression and persecution of the Palestinian people since the establishment of the State of Israel, which has almost become a genocide since October 7, 2023, must come to an end. The protests initiated by university students in many Western countries, especially in the USA, and which continue to grow despite all obstacles, are aimed at ending this oppression and persecution. For world peace to be established sooner or later, Jewish Zionism and, as mentioned above, Christian Zionism, which supports Jewish Zionism under all circumstances or its messianic expectations, must be neutralized. Such ideologies and discourses have no positive side on social peace. In addition, it can be said that Christian Zionism’s use of the Bible texts for modern political purposes is theologically erroneous, morally problematic, and politically dangerous. Such an approach prevents a just solution in the region.

⁸⁶ Ali Harb, “‘Anti-Zionism is antisemitism,’ US House asserts in ‘dangerous’ resolution”, *Aljazeera* (December 06, 2023).

⁸⁷ *The Guardian*, “US House votes to pass antisemitism bill in response to campus protests” (May 01, 2024, last modified on Wed 1 May 2024 23:42 CEST).

⁸⁸ See Ron Kampeas, “Taylor Greene: Antisemitism bill rejects ‘Gospel’ that Jews handed Jesus to executioners” *The Times of Israel* (May 02, 2024).

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§



Understanding the USA's Support for Israel within the Context of Christian Zionism

► Arařtırma makalesi / Research article

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Abstract

This article explores the impact of Christian Zionism on American foreign policy towards Israel and its implications for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Highlighting the recent Al-Aqsa Flood operation led by Hamas and the subsequent violence inflicted by Israel, the study reveals how these events have renewed international scrutiny of Zionism and its influence. Christian Zionists, integral to the broader pro-Israeli lobby in the USA, leverage their theological beliefs, rooted in dispensationalist interpretations, to support Israeli policies. Their influence, though significant, is not without limits. Despite their opposition to a two-state solution and efforts to block peace initiatives like the Oslo Accords and the Wye River Memorandum, the USA administration has occasionally pursued policies contrary to their wishes. This article argues that Christian Zionism is not a conspiracy theory but a substantial factor in shaping the USA support for Israel, driven by theological motivations rather than genuine affection for Jewish people. The study emphasizes the need for further research to understand the broader network of pro-Israeli actors and concludes that the Bible's influence on Anglo-American culture will likely continue to support Israel, despite its human rights violations.

Keywords: Zionism, Christian Zionism, Israel, USA, Foreign Policy.

ABD'nin İsrail'e Desteđini Hıristiyan Siyonizmi Bađlamında Anlamak

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Bu makale, Hıristiyan Siyonizminin Amerika'nın dıř politikasında İsrail'e desteđi ve İsrail-Filistin çatıřması  zerindeki etkilerini incelemektedir. Hamas tarafından gerekleřtirilen Aksa Tufanı operasyonu ve ardından İsrail tarafından Filistinlilere y nelik uygulanan Őiddet, Siyonizm kavramını yeniden uluslararası toplumun g ndemine getirmiřtir. Amerika'da olduka etkili bir konumda olan İsrail lobisinin  nemli bir parası olarak deđerlendirilebilecek olan Hıristiyan Siyonistler, ABD'nin İsrail'e y nelik politikasını da destekleyen teolojik inanlarını dispensasyonalizm ile temellendirmektedir. Hıristiyan Siyonistler, ABD politikasında belirli bir g ce sahip olmalarına rađmen bu g celeri sınırsız deđildir. İki devletli c z me karř olmalarına ve Oslo Anlařmaları ve Wye Nehri Memorandumu gibi bař giriřmelerini engellemeye y nelik abalarına rađmen, ABD y netiminin Hıristiyan Siyonistlerin taleplerine zat politikalar izlediđi de g r lmüřt r. Bu arařtırma, Hıristiyan Siyonizminin bir komple teorisi deđil, ABD'nin İsrail'e desteđini şekillendiren  nemli fakt rler arasında olduđunu ve bu akımın teolojik motivasyonlardan kaynaklandıđını  ne s rmetedir. alıřma, İsrail'i destekleyen akt r ve grupların sahip olduđu geniř etki ađını anlamak iin daha geniř kapsamlı arařtırmalar yapılması gerektiđini vurgularken, İncil'in Anglo-Amerikan k lt r hayatı  zerindeki etkisinin, insan hakları ihlallerine rađmen, İsrail'e destek sađlamaya devam edeceđini  ng rmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Siyonizm, Hıristiyan Siyonizmi, İsrail, ABD, Dıř politika.

Introduction

Due to Israel's occupation of Palestinian lands, the oppression of the Palestinian people and violation of their fundamental rights, the murder of numerous Palestinian civilians, and the Western world's tendency to turn a blind eye to their suffering at the hands of Israel, as well as the lack of accountability for Israeli violations despite substantial documentation by international human rights organizations, and the USA's and its allies' eagerness to provide unconditional support to Israel while it continues to seize Palestinian territories and Judaize sacred places and sanctuaries—with the USA frequently utilizing its veto power at the United Nations Security Council against any resolution draft indicting Israel—the systematic attempts of Israel to undermine the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in Gaza and the West Bank, despite international agreements such as the Oslo Accords of 1993, Israeli actions to Judaize the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the escalation of illegal Jewish settler assaults on the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the radical Israeli government's intention to further annex the West Bank and all of Jerusalem, the humiliation of Palestinian prisoners by the radical Israeli minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, and the unfair blockade of Gaza for over 17 years, the Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) conducted Operation Al-Aqsa Flood on October 7, 2023.

After the Al-Aqsa Flood operation, the Israeli side launched the Swords of Iron operation. While Israel claimed that its objective was to dismantle the military capabilities of Hamas, statements from high-level Israeli political figures, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, suggested a more sinister intent, resembling genocide and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians rather than merely targeting Hamas's military infrastructure. Prime Minister Netanyahu compared Palestinians to Amalekites, a tribe mentioned in the Hebrew Bible that God purportedly ordered the Israelites to completely exterminate.¹ Similarly, Defense Minister Gallant referred to Palestinians as "human animals," a statement that further attempts to justify Israeli actions against Palestinians.² The statistics support these concerns: as of October 20, 2024, approximately 42,603 Palestinians were killed and around 99,795 were injured due to indiscriminate Israeli attacks, with the majority of casualties being women and children.

Immediately after the commencement of the Al-Aqsa Flood operation, the USA declared its unconditional support for Israel, rather than seeking to understand the root causes of the operation and the suffering and humiliation experienced by Palestinians at the hands of the expansionist Israeli state. President Joe Biden, who has previously stated that he is a proud Zionist, reaffirmed this support.³ Secretary of State Antony Blinken visited Israel shortly after the Al-Aqsa Flood and declared his support for Israel, emphasizing his Jewish identity.⁴ Similarly, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin visited Israel and extended the 'ironclad' support of the Washington administration to Netanyahu's government.⁵ Following the Al-

¹ Middle East Monitor (MEM), "Netanyahu declares holy war against Gaza, citing the Bible" (Accessed 16 July 2024).

² Emanuel Fabian, "Defense minister announces 'complete siege' of Gaza: No power food or fuel", *The Times of Israel* (9 October 2023)

³ Reuters, "Biden lands in Israel, hugs Netanyahu and Herzog on tarmac" (Accessed 16 July 2024).

⁴ John Hudson, "Blinken invokes Jewish ancestry in address to grieving Israeli public", *The Washington Post* (12 October 2023).

⁵ Joseph Clark, "Austin: U.S. Commitment to Israel is 'Ironclad'", *DOD News* (13 October 2023).

Aqsa Flood, the USA deployed two aircraft carriers, jets, and warships to the region and provided Israel with additional military supplies, arms, and ammunition. The US military forces also intervened directly to defend Israel during Iran's retaliatory attack after Israel's killing of high-level military officers at the Iranian consulate on April 1, 2024, who were allegedly involved in the preparation of the Hamas-led Al-Aqsa Flood operation.

The USA's support for Israel did not end there. Despite Israel's killing and maiming of over 140,000 predominantly women and children Palestinians, the USA did not hesitate to host Prime Minister Netanyahu and even allowed him to deliver a speech to members of Congress on July 24, 2024. While Netanyahu was addressing the US Congress, highly influential American Christian Zionist pastor John Hagee was also present, accompanying Netanyahu as a symbol of his unconditional support for Israel. During his repeatedly applauded speech, Netanyahu referred to the Bible, saying that his country is where Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob prayed, Isaiah and Jeremiah preached, and David and Solomon ruled, in an attempt to justify Israel's expansionist policies and illegal occupation of Palestinian territories. He stressed the importance of USA-Israeli cooperation in the fields of security and intelligence. While he claimed that Israeli operations helped the USA avoid deploying boots on the ground, he depicted Israel as the protector of civilization against barbarism, aiming to legitimize his government's ethnic cleansing efforts towards Palestinians. He further demanded additional ammunition from the USA to accelerate Israel's military incursion, saying, "Give us the tools faster, we would finish the job faster." In his speech to Congress, Netanyahu called for a new alliance between the USA and Israel, which he named the "Abraham Alliance." While expressing his gratitude towards President Biden for defending Israel against direct Iranian missile and drone attacks, he also thanked President Trump for developing the Abraham Accords, which were designed to further increase Israeli influence in the region. Additionally, he credited Trump for recognizing Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem and for moving the American embassy to Jerusalem. Netanyahu declared that Jerusalem is the eternal capital of Israel and will never be divided again. Throughout his speech, he frequently referred to biblical accounts to whitewash Israel's indiscriminate killings of Palestinian civilians and illegal expansionism into Palestinian territories.⁶ During his approximately 50-minute-long address, Netanyahu predominantly focused on the deep partnership and cooperation between the USA and Israel, which was enthusiastically welcomed by the congressmen, as his speech was repeatedly interrupted with loud applause.

Benyamin Netanyahu's visit was the highest level of diplomatic engagement from Israel to the USA since the commencement of the Hamas-led Al-Aqsa Flood operation. It is noteworthy that just one week after Netanyahu visited Washington, Israel killed Hamas's charismatic political leader, Ismail Haniyeh, in Iran, along with Iran-sponsored Hezbollah's high-level military commander and founder of the organization's military wing, on the same day.⁷ It is almost unimaginable that such daring and high-level assassinations, which significantly impact the stability and balance of power dynamics in the Middle East, were not approved by Israel's strategic ally, the USA. In other words, the Washington administration likely gave a green light to Israel to eliminate such high-level figures who are

⁶ Haaretz, "FULL TEXT: Netanyahu's 2024 Address to Congress" (25 July 2024).

⁷ Federica Marsi, "Israel war on Gaza updates: Fears of escalation grow after Haniyeh killing", Al Jazeera (31 July 2024).

also affiliated with Washington's main regional concern, Iran. These high-profile assassinations, serving the interests of both the USA and Israel, are just another example of the long-standing close partnership between these two countries.

The strategic partnership between Israel and the USA is a very broad topic, and it is almost impossible to cover every angle of this alliance in a one single article. Therefore, in this study, the reasons behind this close cooperation will be analyzed within the context of Christian Zionism. Just as the Zionist ideology is supported by many Jews who prioritize the return to their homeland, the same ideology is also supported by millions of conservative Christians. According to the theological understanding of Christian Zionists, the re-Judaization of the holy lands promised to Abraham and his offspring, who were blessed by God according to the Biblical account, is a sign of the return of Jesus Christ. These Christian Zionists hold a certain level of influence in both the politics and society of the USA. Within this context, Christian Zionism will be analyzed as one of the reasons behind American support for Israel. Although it is certainly not the only reason, this study suggests that comprehending Christian Zionists' motivations will help to understand one of the reasons behind the USA's support for Israel. Accordingly, this study has implications for scholarly debates situated at the nexus of theological understanding and the discipline of international relations, as well as for policymaking processes and decisions.

1. Understanding the Dynamics of Christian Zionism

The Christian Zionists, who can be regarded as part of the broader pro-Israeli Christian Right movement, are salient actors within the so-called Israeli lobby in the USA. American Evangelist pastor Jerry Falwell⁸, who founded the Thomas Road Baptist Church in Virginia; Gary Lee Bauer⁹, an executive at Christians United for Israel and the Emergency Committee for Israel; conservative Christian leader Pat Robertson¹⁰, former president of the Christian Broadcasting Network; and the renowned Evangelical pastor John Hagee¹¹, founder of Christians United for Israel, organizer of the "A Night to Honor Israel" gatherings, financier of the Israeli Zionist organization Im Tirtzu, and proponent of the idea that the Bible commands Christians to support Israel, are prominent religious figures of the Christian Zionist movement in the USA. Additionally, former Republican Congressman and House Majority Leader Tom DeLay, a staunch supporter of Israel, visited Israel and delivered a speech to the Israeli Knesset in 2003, who was described as the farthest right even by far-right Israeli politicians and perceived as worse than Likud by the former head of the Israeli intelligence organization Mossad.¹² DeLay also campaigned against aid to Palestine. Another former Republican Congressman and House Majority Leader, Dick Armey, advocated for the complete annexation of the occupied Palestinian territories by Israel and the total expulsion of Palestinians to neighboring Arab countries.¹³ Republican Senator from

⁸ Christian Heritage, "Jerry Falwell" (Accessed 18 July 2024).

⁹ Israeli-American Council (IAC), "Gary L. Bauer" (Accessed 18 July 2024).

¹⁰ Ben Finley, "Pat Robertson, broadcaster who helped make religion central to GOP politics, dies at 93", *AP News* (9 June 2023).

¹¹ Jewish News Syndicate (JNS), "John Hagee, Christians United for Israel", (1 April 2018).

¹² Lou Dubose – Jan Reid, *The Hammer: God, Money and the Rise of the Republican Congress* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 236.

¹³ Matthew Engel, "Senior Republican calls on Israel to expel West Bank Arabs", *The Guardian* (4 May 2022).

Oklahoma, Jim Inhofe, heavily campaigned against boycott movements targeting Israel and Jewish settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories. These individuals are among the prominent political leaders of American Christian Zionists. The majority of Christian evangelicals, often described as Christian Zionists and organized into various associations to bolster support for Israel, are significant allies of the pro-Israel camp within the American political spectrum.

2. Dispensationalism

The primary reason behind Christian Zionists' unconditional support for Israel and its brutal policies towards Palestinians, which have been repeatedly condemned by international human rights organizations as well as by the UN General Assembly, is the dispensationalist theological understanding systematized by Christian British cleric John Nelson Darby in the 19th century. Darby interpreted the Old and New Testaments with the belief that mankind has been passing through several periods and that in each of these distinct periods, or dispensations, humanity will experience new tests or challenges. According to dispensationalist theology, in the last dispensation before doomsday, Jesus Christ will return to the Holy Lands promised by God to Abraham and his descendants. He will crush the Antichrist and establish his kingdom, which will rule the world for one thousand years, or a millennium. According to dispensationalists, the return of the Jews to the Holy Lands is a harbinger of the return of Jesus Christ. For this reason, Christian Zionists also politically advocate for the illegal expansionist policies of the State of Israel and the Judaization of the Promised Lands.

Christian Zionism has its roots in the theological understanding of dispensationalism, a biblical interpretation method that emerged in 19th-century Britain, primarily systematized by John Nelson Darby. It could be argued that dispensationalism is a form of premillennialism, which maintains that humanity will undergo a period of worsening hardships prior to the return of Jesus Christ. Dispensationalists believe that Christ's return was prophesied in both the Old and New Testaments and that the repopulation of Palestinian lands with Jews is a significant development in the divinely ordained plan leading to Christ's return. Darby's biblical interpretation in dispensationalism has influenced millions of Christians, including high-level statesmen. It has been speculated that the strong biblical influence in Anglo-Saxon society may have been a factor in British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour's openness to the idea of establishing a Jewish state in Palestinian lands.¹⁴

After dispensationalism was first popularized in Britain, figures such as Dwight Moody, founder of the Moody Bible Institute, and William Blackstone played pivotal roles in disseminating dispensationalist biblical understanding in the USA during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Contemporary fictional series about Armageddon, such as LaHaye's "Left Behind" and Lindsey's "The Late Great Planet Earth," have also contributed to the further popularization of dispensationalist theological interpretation. The foundation of Israel in 1948, immediately following the end of the British mandate, gave momentum to followers of dispensationalist theology. The dramatic Israeli victory over several Arab neighbors during the Six-Day War in 1967 was regarded as a pivotal moment for Christian Zionists, significantly enhancing their political influence. The capture of Jerusalem and the

¹⁴ Irvine H. Anderson, *Biblical Interpretation and Middle East Policy The Promised Land, American, and Israel, 1917-2002* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida), 61.

West Bank entirely by Israel has been perceived as the realization of biblical prophecy. Due to these prophetic signs, Christian Zionists, including but not limited to dispensationalists and Evangelicals, have worked to influence the U.S. government to ensure that it operates in accordance with the plan revealed in both the Old and New Testaments.¹⁵ While dispensationalists played a relatively passive role in spreading their religious ideology before the Israeli victory in 1967, Israel's large-scale territorial expansion after the war significantly influenced Christian Zionists to take a more proactive role in politics, finance, and religious propaganda.¹⁶ The Israeli victory and the capture of lands promised in the Old and New Testaments significantly benefited the Christian Right in the USA. During the same period, dispensationalist and evangelical organizations also gained considerable prominence in politics.

In line with their strong support for Israel, American Christian Zionists are described as a strategic asset for the Jewish state, alongside the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). Similarly, high-level officials from Israel have claimed that the future of the relationship between the USA and Israel depends more on Christian Zionists than on American Jews.¹⁷

3. Christian Zionist Organizations

Christian Zionists have founded several non-governmental organizations to further deepen U.S. support for Israel. Notably, Christian Zionist preacher John Hagee established Christians United for Israel (CUFI), often described as the Christian counterpart to AIPAC. Additionally, the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (ICEJ), the Christians' Israel Public Action Committee, Christian Friends of Israeli Communities (CFIC), the Unity Coalition for Israel, and the National Christian Leadership Conference for Israel are among the most influential Christian Zionist organizations working to strengthen American support for the state of Israel.¹⁸ While the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews (IFCJ), directed by Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein, aims to foster cooperation between Jews and Christians and provide comprehensive support for the state of Israel, Christian Zionists continue to be influential actors within the organization. By 2002, the organization developed a partnership with Christian Zionist Republican political strategist Ralph Reed to establish a new movement, 'Stand for Israel.' The objective of this new organization is to connect with people on behalf of Israel and to organize an annual global prayer and solidarity day in support of Israel.¹⁹

Following the Israeli victory in 1967, Christian Zionists took a more proactive role as their interests and religious convictions increasingly aligned with Jewish support for the expansion of illegal settlements and opposition to the two-state solution for Israel and Palestine. CUFI's Christian Zionist leader, Pastor John Hagee, explained his movement's support for Israel by stating that, while other nations were founded by mankind, Israel was

¹⁵ Timothy P. Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon: How Evangelicals Became Israel's Best Friend* (Michigan: Baker Academic, 2004), 190.

¹⁶ Jane Lampman, "Mixing prophecy and politics", *The Christian Science Monitor* (7 July 2004).

¹⁷ Clifford Kiracofe, *Dark Crusade: Christian Zionism and US foreign policy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 138-150.

¹⁸ Daniel Hummel, *Covenant Brothers: Evangelicals, Jews, and U.S.-Israeli Relations* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), 96.

¹⁹ William Dale, "The Impact of Christian Zionism on American Policy", *American Diplomacy* 9/2 (2004).

founded by God. They also oppose the two-state solution because it would entail giving part of the lands promised to Jews to Arabs, which they believe contradicts biblical prophecy. Consistent with the Old and New Testament prophecies regarding lands promised to Jews, CUFI has funded around \$12 million for Israeli settlers, including those establishing new illegal settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.²⁰

It should be noted that the religious convictions of the CUFI organization and those of its leader, Pastor John Hagee, closely resemble those of other Christian Zionists. Ed McAteer, a prominent figure in the Evangelical movement, also asserted that the lands between the Mediterranean Sea, the Dead Sea, and the Jordan River, including Gaza and the West Bank, fall within Jewish territory.²¹ Similarly, ICEJ executive Malcolm Hedding denied the existence of Palestinians. Furthermore, Hedding emphasized that the territories given to Abraham by God around 4,000 years ago now belong to Israel.²² Likewise, CFIC continues to operate, providing aid to Israeli settlers, including those in illegal settlements located in the occupied Palestinian territories. Specifically, the illegal settlements in the Judea and Samaria regions receive direct support from American churches. American Christian Zionists are funding the construction of infrastructure for illegal Jewish settlements in the West Bank.²³

4. Christian Zionists' Support for Israeli Occupation

As previously mentioned, the primary reason behind Christian Zionists' opposition to any form of a two-state solution is that such a solution would entail the concession of lands promised to Jews to Arabs. Just before Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's historic visit to Israel in 1977, Christian Zionists in the U.S. openly demonstrated their fierce opposition to what they perceived as the partition of territories promised to Jews by placing advertisements in newspapers.²⁴ In a similar vein, the Third International Zionist Congress, held in 1996, declared that it would be a mistake for any country to diplomatically recognize the existence of a Palestinian state in any part of the promised lands of Israel. Christian Zionists were determined that the territories given to the Jewish people by God would not be divided.²⁵ Due to their zealous beliefs, American Christian Zionists even claimed that Ariel Sharon, then Prime Minister of Israel, suffered a stroke as a divine punishment for his role in the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza.²⁶ According to Christian Zionist understanding, Sharon was retreating from the land promised by God to placate the EU and the UN. These statements clearly illustrate how resolute and steadfast Christian Zionists are in defending Israel based on their biblical interpretations.

The aforementioned Christian Zionist convictions also inspired high-level American legislators. After visiting the West Bank and the Golan Heights—captured from Syria by

²⁰ Stephen Spector, *Evangelicals and Israel: The Story of American Christian Zionism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 292-296.

²¹ John Hubers, "Palestinians, Christian Zionists and the Good News Gospel", *Journal of Lutheran Ethics* 7/5 (May 2007).

²² Lampman, "Mixing Prophecy and Politics"

²³ Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon: How Evangelicals Became Israel's Best Friend*, 227.

²⁴ Mohdafandi Salleh, *The Christian Right and US Foreign Policy in the Twenty-First Century* (Durham: Durham University, School of Government and International Affairs, 2011), 126.

²⁵ Colin Shindler, "Likud and the Christian Dispensationalists: A Symbiotic Relationship", *Israel Studies* 5/1 (Spring, 2000), 153-182.

²⁶ Brennan Linsley, "Pat Robertson apologizes for Sharon slam", *NBC News* (13 January 2006).

Israel and still disputed by the Damascus regime—former Republican House Majority Leader Tom DeLay delivered a speech at an AIPAC conference, asserting that these lands are not occupied territories but belong to Israel.²⁷ Another high-level influential Republican politician, Richard Armev, similarly supported the total annexation of the West Bank by Israel and argued that the Arab population residing in the area should be expelled.²⁸ Furthermore, another Republican politician, James Inhofe, Senator from Oklahoma, asserted that God revealed Himself to Abraham at Hebron and granted the West Bank to him, using this as justification for Israel's claim to occupy all Palestinian lands.²⁹

5. Christian Zionism and Israeli Right

While Israel expanded its territories and illegal settlements on the occupied Palestinian lands, Jewish land grab was supported and justified by Christian Zionists with prophecy of the Old and New Testaments. Naturally, this situation led radical Israelis and Christian Zionists to forge an alliance. Particularly in the wake of the historic 1977 elections, in which, for the first time in Israel's history, the radical political right under the leadership of the Likud Party gained a majority and ended the left-wing rule, Christian Zionists and the radical Israeli Right established a cooperative relationship.³⁰

6th Prime Minister of Israel, and the founder of the right-wing Likud Party, Menachem Begin, granted a private jet for American Christian Zionist pastor Jerry Falwell in 1979. Thanks to Prime Minister Begin, pastor Falwell became the first ever non-Jew who were awarded with highly prized Jabotinsky Medal for his services for Israel and Jews. After an Israeli operation known as Operation Opera, conducted by the Israeli Air Force and targeting the Tuwaitha Nuclear Reactor in Iraq in 1981, Prime Minister Begin allegedly contacted Christian Zionist pastor Falwell to shape public opinion in the USA in line with Israeli interests, even before reaching out to President Reagan himself.³¹ Under the supervision of the Israel Christian Advocacy Council, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu hosted high-level Christian Zionists in Israel in 1996, in an attempt to further cement the ties between the Israeli Right and Christian Zionists. In 2002, right-wing Israeli politician Ehud Olmert, who eventually served as Prime Minister of Israel, and American Christian Zionist Pat Robertson jointly directed the Praying for Jerusalem campaign.³² Israel supported Christian Zionists' tours to its territories, as these visits not only provided income but also helped consolidate Christian Zionist advocacy for Israel. In 2002, Israeli Prime Minister Sharon called for more Christian Zionists to visit Israel to support the Israeli cause during his address at religious festivities held by ICEJ. Similarly, Israeli leader Olmert described Christian Zionists as a vital component of Israel's support network and defense.³³

²⁷ Robert L. Handley, "Cascading activation: Bush's 'war on terrorism' and the Israeli—Palestinian conflict", *Journalism* 11/4 (2010), 445-461.

²⁸ Engel, "Senior Republican calls on Israel to expel West Bank Arabs"

²⁹ Robert O. Smith, *More Desired than Our Own Salvation: The Roots of Christian Zionism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 21-26.

³⁰ Shindler, "Likud and the Christian Dispensationalists: A Symbiotic Relationship", 153-182.

³¹ Grace Halsell, *Prophecy and Politics: Militant Evangelists on the Road to Nuclear War* (Connecticut: Lawrence Hill & Co., 1986), 75.

³² Chip Berlet, "Pastor Hagee's Armageddon Politics", *Huffington Post* (30 May 2008).

³³ Aaron William Stone, *Dispensationalism and United States Foreign Policy with Israel* (Texas: University of Texas, The Graduate School, Master of Arts in Political Science, 2008), 68.

The alliance between Christian Zionists and the Israeli Right, which has been governing Israel since the historic 1977 Knesset elections, is further evident in various regional issues concerning Israel's national interests. The 2006 Lebanon War, in which Israel heavily targeted Hezbollah—supported by Israel's arch-enemy Iran—serves as a dramatic example. During this conflict, Christian Zionist organizations like CUFI held gatherings to support Israel, while American Christian Zionists described the war as a prelude to the Battle of Armageddon and the return of Christ.³⁴ Acclaimed Christian Zionist author Hal Lindsey even went so far as to call for a nuclear assault against the Tehran regime to ensure the safety and security of Israel. Similarly, Christian Zionist pastor John Hagee implied that the war of Ezekiel, mentioned in the Bible as an epic clash that would take place in Israeli lands during the latter days, in which God would save His people from King Gog and his army from Magog, would be the war between Israel and Iran.³⁵ While Christian Zionist John Hagee confidently claimed that there would be a nuclear confrontation between Israel and Iran, he also accused the Washington administration in 2006 of not actively supporting Israel, further calling for a bombardment of Iran.³⁶

Even though Christian Zionists are concerned not only with Israel but also with advancing a comprehensive conservative agenda in the USA and converting Jews to Christianity in line with their dispensationalist beliefs, an alliance with Christian Zionists is still endorsed by Jewish groups operating in the USA. AIPAC deepened its cooperation with Christian Zionist movements in the USA. The Zionist Organization of America, which has close ties with the Israeli far-right ruling Likud party, established strong connections with the American Christian Zionist religious leader Jerry Falwell. Additionally, Irving Kristol, one of the principal architects of the neoconservative movement in the USA and who himself came from a Jewish background, supported the partnership between Christian Zionists and the Jewish right.³⁷ One of the former executives of the pro-Israeli Anti-Defamation League (ADL) also supported the alignment of interests between Christian Zionists and Jews due to their shared prioritization of the security of the state of Israel. Another ADL executive, who even denounced the extremely conservative agenda of Christian Zionists, asserted that the ADL values the support of Christian Zionists because of the grave threats facing the state of Israel. One of the senior officers from the pro-Israeli Jewish political group, the American Jewish Committee, acknowledged the practical and realistic nature of the alliance between Christian Zionists and pro-Israeli right-wing movements, noting that this alliance currently contributes positively to Israel's national security concerns and interests in a tumultuous region.³⁸

Christian Zionist John Hagee's opening speech at the 2007 AIPAC Conference was another significant manifestation of the alliance between Christian Zionists and pro-Israeli Jews, who are attempting to shape the foreign policy preferences of the Washington administration in line with Israel's national security priorities. Despite Hagee's accusations that Jews lack a proper religious life, suggesting that anti-Semitic movements originate from

³⁴ Brian L. Stuckert, *Strategic Implications of American Millennialism* (Kansas: US Army Command and General Staff College, School of Advanced Military Studies, 2008), 44-51.

³⁵ John Hagee, *Jerusalem Countdown: A Warning to the World* (Florida: Frontline, 2006), 18.

³⁶ John J. Mearsheimer – Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 136.

³⁷ Irving Kristol, "The Political Dilemma of American Jews", *The Commentary Magazine* (July 1984).

³⁸ Shalom Goldman, "Christians and Zionism", *American Jewish History* 93/2 (June 2007), 245-260.

Jewish defiance of God and that the Lord directs anti-Semitic attacks to compel Jews to accept Him, members of AIPAC welcomed him for his opening speech at the pro-Israeli organizational gathering. Despite his negative remarks about Jews, Hagee was received favorably by AIPAC's leadership due to his strong advocacy for the state of Israel.³⁹

6. Unholy Alliance

It should be noted that the underlying agenda of Christian Zionists causes considerable concern among Jews. Interactions with Christian Zionists are primarily undertaken by Jews for the benefit of the state of Israel. The true and long-lasting objective of Christian Zionists is to ensure the conversion of Jews to Christianity following their migration to Eretz Israel. Additionally, they vehemently oppose any peace deal that would involve territorial concessions to non-Jews. Overall, their strict religious and political views significantly complicate the prospects for peace in the Middle East.

Jewish journalist and writer Jo Mort, whose expertise lies in the Israeli-Palestinian issue and who is a member of Americans for Peace Now, describes the partnership between pro-Israeli Jews and Christian Zionists as an 'unholy alliance,' given their completely different and conflicting long-term goals despite their current close cooperation. Many so-called moderate American Jews also caution against radical Christian Zionist support for Israeli territorial expansions at the expense of Palestinians, as well as the settlement of these lands with additional Jews, which could further hinder the prospects for peace between the two sides.

As a matter of fact, within the dispensationalist agenda of Christian Zionists, Jews are merely characters in a grand narrative designed by God. Consequently, Christian Zionists do not have a particular affection for Jews beyond their role in their understanding of this divine narrative. Ultimately, for dispensationalist Christian Zionists, Jews face two options: they will either die as Jews or convert to Christianity by accepting Jesus Christ as their savior and Lord. In other words, for Jews who are not inclined to convert to Christianity, the end-times prophecy of Christian Zionists offers a rather unpromising destiny within the overall context of dispensationalist theological understanding.⁴⁰

7. Importance and Limits of Christian Zionism

Christian Zionists can be positioned as an influential group within the broader framework of the pro-Israeli lobby in USA politics. Christian Zionists reinforced rigid and uncompromising approaches both in Tel Aviv and Washington by extending support to illegal Jewish settler expansion on occupied Palestinian lands, while also overtly rebuking any peace deal between Israel and Palestine that involves land transfers. Consequently, the radical and persistent pro-Israeli efforts of Christian Zionists complicated efforts by the USA to pressure Israel into adopting a more lenient course of action. The increase in the number of settlers, fueled by substantial financial aid from Christian Zionists, can be seen as a key factor contributing to the diminished prospects of a peace agreement between the parties involved.

³⁹ Christopher Jones, *Rushing Ahead to Armageddon* (Florida: Xulon Press, 2010), 297.

⁴⁰ Jo-Ann Mort, "An Unholy Alliance in Support of Israel", *Los Angeles Times* (19 May 2022).

Additionally, it should be noted that Christian Zionists also organize religious tours to the region, which serves as a lucrative revenue stream for the Tel Aviv administration.⁴¹

The existence of the Christian Zionist movement supporting Israel also demonstrates that backing Israel is not only carried out by Jews but also by non-Jews. This further supports the idea that a broad coalition of various organizations is behind the pro-Israeli alliance in the USA. This situation creates pressure on non-Jewish policymakers and practitioners in the USA to align their policy preferences with support for Israel. It is also important to recognize that the Bible and Christianity continue to exert a profound influence on Anglo-American culture, which, whether directly or indirectly, drives Christian believers to adopt a pro-Israeli stance in accordance with dispensationalist Christian beliefs. These beliefs suggest that the return of Jesus Christ will follow the repopulation of the Holy Lands with Jews. Although not all Americans are influenced by dispensationalist theology, many Christian Americans were either raised by Bible-reading parents or attended Sunday school where they learned biblical stories from clergy. This has led them to internalize the notion that the assembly of Jews in Palestine is a natural step in the dispensationalist prophetic process. After internalizing such dispensationalist dogmas, many Christian Americans naively believe that it is both appropriate and acceptable for Jewish people to return to Palestinian lands and establish an independent state, which they see as a harbinger of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.⁴²

Although Christian Zionists are firmly devoted to the creation of a Greater Israel encompassing all the lands promised by God to Abraham and his descendants and vehemently oppose the two-state solution because it would involve the cession of a portion of these holy and promised lands to outsiders, it is important to recognize that the influence of Christian Zionists has its limits. Their staunch opposition to the two-state solution, rooted in rigid religious and dogmatic beliefs, did not prevent U.S. President Bill Clinton from pursuing the two-state solution at the Camp David Summit, where he mediated peace efforts between Palestine's Yasser Arafat and Israel's Ehud Barak in 2000. Christian Zionists were also unable to block the Wye River Memorandum, which authorized the Israeli military withdrawal from certain parts of the West Bank. This memorandum was accepted by Palestine's Yasser Arafat and Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu and was brokered by U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in 1998. Additionally, despite significant support from Christian Zionists, Republican U.S. President George W. Bush dramatically expressed his endorsement for an independent Palestinian state.

Unlike other components of the pro-Israeli lobby in the USA, Christian Zionists' primary concern is not solely the state of Israel and its national security. They also prioritize other social and cultural issues in line with their ultra-conservative agenda. According to the Pew Research Center (2021), approximately 24% of U.S. adults, totaling around 80 million individuals, identify as evangelical Christians, who largely support this dispensationalist theological approach that favors the state of Israel. In contrast, Wheaton College's Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals (2016) estimates that between 90 to 100 million Americans, accounting for about 30-35% of the population, could be classified as

⁴¹ Ilan Ben Zion, "Christian pilgrims fuel Holy Land tourism boom", *Financial Times* (20 April 2019).

⁴² Peter Gries, *The Politics of American Foreign Policy: How Ideology Divides Liberals and Conservatives over Foreign Affairs*, (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2014), 185-200.

evangelical.⁴³ It should also be mentioned that Christian Zionist groups are not as professionally organized as other parts of the pro-Israeli alliance in the USA, such as AIPAC. Moreover, they do not often scrutinize national security or foreign policy issues in-depth to the same extent as other influential members of the pro-Israeli circles who aim to shape Washington's policies in Israel's interests. Academic studies further prove that their political lobbying capabilities are not as strong either.⁴⁴ However, influential figures such as John Hagee highlight that individual leaders within these movements can possess substantial lobbying influence. Nevertheless, Christian Zionists still carry out lobbying activities in Washington in the interests of Israel, albeit to a limited extent compared to other pro-Israeli groups in the USA.⁴⁵ It is important to emphasize that while Christian Zionists strive for the well-being of the state of Israel, this issue represents only one item in their comprehensive conservative Christian agenda. However, following the events of October 7, 2023, and the subsequent incursions, Israel has once again become the most prominent subject on their agenda. Additionally, during President Donald Trump's administration, the evangelical lobby experienced its golden age, further amplifying its influence in advocating pro-Israel policies. In contrast, other influential pro-Israeli groups are operating in the USA that prioritize Washington's aid to Tel Aviv as a key focus of their activities. Pro-Israeli organizations like AIPAC and ADL conduct lobbying operations with that vision. Similarly, the Washington Institute and the Jewish Institute for National Security of America are among the influential research and policy institutes that shape Washington's academic and foreign policy agenda to further cement its support in favor of Israel.

It is important to remember that not all Christians in the USA support the state of Israel and its actions toward Palestinians. While biblical prophecies about Israel do exist, Jewish brutality against Arabs cannot be justified by any legitimate religious teaching. Despite the influence of biblical teachings in Anglo-American culture, many churches in the Western world, including those in the Anglo-American sphere, denounce the oppression of Palestinians by Israel and advocate for a two-state solution to achieve peace in the Middle East, according to their interpretation of Christianity.⁴⁶ Just as many Jewish people in the Western world oppose the actions of the Israeli state, there are also millions of Christians calling for peace.

There are also significant differences between Christian Zionists and other influential pro-Israel organizations regarding economic influence and media visibility. Although it would be a mistake to underestimate the financial strength of Christian Zionists, many other pro-Israel and Jewish organizations wield substantial monetary dominance in the USA. Similarly, regarding regional issues and developments affecting Israel's security and interests, media outlets do not typically seek the opinions of Christian Zionists. While it is true that

⁴³ Aslam Abdullah, "Part 4: Evangelicals in the U.S: Population Statistics and State Rankings," *IslamicCity*, July 7, 2024, <https://www.islamicity.org/102139/evangelicals-in-the-u-s-population-statistics-and-state-rankings/> (Accessed October 29, 2024).

⁴⁴ Steve Brouwer vd., *Exporting the American Gospel: Global Christian Fundamentalism*, (New York: Routledge, 2013), 115.

⁴⁵ Spector, *Evangelicals and Israel: The Story of American Christian Zionism*, 297-301.

⁴⁶ Paul Peter Jesep, *Crucifying Jesus and Secularizing America: The Republic of Faith Without Wisdom*, (Indiana: Xlibris Publishing, 2008), 151-172.

Christian Zionist pastors have a sizable audience for spiritual guidance, highly circulated and respected newspapers and major TV outlets with broad audience reach tend to consult academics and experts from professional research and higher education institutions. Nonetheless, Christian Zionists have become an increasingly influential component of the pro-Israel coalition in the USA, particularly in recent years. This growing influence is exemplified by their role in significant political decisions, such as President Donald Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital and the relocation of the U.S. embassy. Additionally, influential leaders like Pastor John Hagee have collaborated closely with prominent political figures, participating in events such as the inauguration of the U.S. embassy in Jerusalem and facilitating meetings between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and U.S. officials before congressional addresses. These actions highlight the expanding lobbying capacity and political impact of Christian Zionist organizations within the broader pro-Israel advocacy alliance.

Conclusion

Hamas led the Al-Aqsa Flood operation, and the following atrocities and incidents of violence committed by Israel against tens of thousands of Palestinians, predominantly women and children, could be seen as equivalent to ethnic cleansing or genocide. This once again brought the concept of Zionism to the attention of the international community. While the conceptualization of Zionism is mostly focused on debates covering the Palestine/Israel issue, the subject of Christian Zionism and its implications for unconditional American support for Israel remains understudied. This article attempts to fill this gap in the literature.

Christian Zionists can be regarded as an integral part of the broader pro-Israeli lobby in the USA, significantly influencing the Washington administration to align its foreign policy to preserve and safeguard the national security interests of the State of Israel, which they believe was founded on the lands promised to Abraham and his descendants by God himself. Christian Zionists are not only comprised of religious Christian leaders who can significantly influence the conservative segments of American society but also high-level politicians who play pivotal roles in drafting and legislating pro-Israeli laws in the legislative bodies of the USA. Additionally, both prominent religious and political leaders from the USA organize regular visits to Israel to further cement the ties between Washington and Tel Aviv.

While it is believed that dispensationalist biblical prophecy was among the motivations behind British Foreign Secretary Balfour's sympathy for the creation of a Jewish state on the Promised Lands mentioned in the Bible, dispensationalist theology was spread to and popularized in the USA by Christian Zionist clergymen Moody and Blackstone. The creation of the State of Israel on the Promised Lands to Abraham in 1948, and more astonishingly Israel's groundbreaking victory over its neighbors in the Six-Day War of 1967, in which the Arab regimes, allies of the Soviet Union—the USA's archenemy during the Cold War period—were utterly humiliated, whetted the appetite of Christian Zionists in terms of emboldening their support for Israel. Because Israel captured the entirety of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and the West Bank as a result of its dramatic victory, Christian Zionists perceived this development as a fulfillment of the biblical prophecy that Jews are indeed in the process of repopulating the Promised Lands, which is a sign of the return of Jesus Christ.

After the 1967 Israeli victory and its reverberations on the comprehension of conservative Christian circles, Christian Zionists began to follow more enthusiastic and aspirational policies to bolster their support for Israel. Their activities took shape under the umbrella of several influential Christian Zionist organizations in an attempt to maximize American support for Israel. Moreover, these organizations engage in comprehensive lobbying initiatives, collaborate with political authorities, and facilitate gatherings that promote pro-Israel agendas within the American political context.

Christians United for Israel (CUFI), International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (ICEJ), the Christians' Israel Public Action Committee, Christian Friends of Israeli Communities (CFIC), the Unity Coalition for Israel, and the National Christian Leadership Conference for Israel are leading Christian Zionist organizations working in this effort. Through these bodies, radical Christian Zionists prioritizing dispensationalist understanding are making every effort to block any form of a two-state solution between Palestine and Israel because they vehemently oppose the concession of the Promised Lands to non-Jews, which would be against dispensationalist theology. Similarly, they are financing the expansion of illegal Jewish settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, which is another significant barrier to Middle East peace. Both Christian Zionist politicians and clergymen regularly visit Israel and directly encourage high-level radical right-wing Israeli politicians to continue their expansionist policies, seriously undermining the fundamental human rights of Palestinians and humiliating them. In a sense, it could be claimed that there is a noteworthy symbiotic relationship between Christian Zionists and the radical right-wing Israeli political movement, which has been governing Israel since the historic 1977 Knesset elections. Israeli expansionist policies in the Promised Lands to Abraham support the legitimacy of the Christian Zionists because they interpret Israeli aggression on Palestinian lands as the fulfillment of God's prophecy mentioned in the Bible. Believing that they are on the right side of this dispensationalist process due to Israeli aggression, Christian Zionists further intensify their socio-cultural and political influence to affect the Washington administration and the American people to further support Israel.

However, it must be remembered that this very close cooperation between the Israeli right and Christian Zionists is actually an unholy alliance. Even though radical Christian Zionists support Jews occupying Palestinian lands, they do not do so out of affection for them. They are merely a pawn in the grand design that would eventually lead to the return of Jesus Christ, in accordance with dispensationalism. When Jesus returns, Jews are expected to convert to Christianity and accept Jesus Christ as their savior. However, this premise is largely false. Although there are many notable exceptions, the majority of Jews have historically shown no inclination to convert to Christianity, and this trend continues today. Furthermore, there is no concrete evidence indicating that they would be willing to convert even if Jesus Christ were to return to the Holy Lands, as believed by Christian Zionist dispensationalist theology. Jews are content that Christian Zionists are among the actors influencing American society and government in favor of their Jewish state and its horrific policies towards Palestinians, but beyond that, they do not share the same biblical dispensationalist interpretation with Christian Zionists. Therefore, even though these two groups heavily support each other, their cooperation is not based on genuine friendship but rather on self-calculated interests that will eventually put them on a collision course in the long term.

Although Christian Zionists are integral members of the broader pro-Israeli alliance in the USA, their influence operates differently compared to organizations like AIPAC and the ADL. Christian Zionists, exemplified by leaders such as Pastor John Hagee, view the protection of Israel as a religious and moral duty. Consequently, while organizations like AIPAC focus primarily on the political and strategic defense of Israel, Christian Zionist groups address a wider array of moral and religious issues alongside their pro-Israel advocacy. Many Christians in the Anglo-American sphere were raised by Bible-reading parents and attended Sunday Bible schools, which imbued the Bible with significant influence over their social and cultural worldview. However, this does not imply that all Christians are Zionists or that they support Israel's policies towards its neighbors simply because they are mentioned in the Bible. Millions of devout Christians oppose the atrocities committed by Israel against civilians.

Additionally, there are limits to the political influence of Christian Zionists even within the USA. Despite their firm opposition to a two-state solution, due to their reluctance to cede any portion of the Holy Lands to non-Jews, the U.S. administration facilitated the Oslo Accords between the Palestinian Authority and the State of Israel in 2000. Furthermore, Christian Zionists were unable to prevent the successful conclusion of the Wye River Memorandum, which mandated Israel's military withdrawal from certain areas of the West Bank. Despite their significant influence on his administration, President George W. Bush openly supported the creation of an independent Palestinian state. These political developments concerning the Palestinian-Israeli issue indicate that, while Christian Zionists historically faced limitations in their influence, their role has significantly expanded since President Donald Trump's administration. Notably, Christian Zionists played a crucial role in influencing Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital, thereby amplifying their impact on major foreign policy decisions concerning Israel.

Regardless of the debates over their power and limitations, the existence of Christian Zionism and its socio-political activities in support of Israel—despite its significant human rights violations, which were once again highlighted by the recent Al-Aqsa Flood operation led by Hamas—is not a conspiracy theory but a reality. Similar to other lobbying groups in the USA that advocate for specific interest groups, Christian Zionists operate within the framework of a broader pro-Israeli lobby in the country. This study aims to understand Christian Zionists' support for Israel and its underlying causes, which are rooted in dispensationalist biblical interpretation. Further comprehensive and extensive research is necessary to fully understand the other actors and their motivations in supporting Israel. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to assume that the influence of the Christian Bible, which significantly impacts Anglo-American culture, will likely remain a major factor behind the support for Israel among millions of Americans, despite its severe human rights violations, in the foreseeable future. In recent years, Christian Zionists have substantially increased their influence and impact within the United States, particularly within the pro-Israel coalition. Although they previously encountered setbacks in influencing American political leadership, their strategic advocacy and collaboration with key political figures have positioned them more favorably today. Notably, Christian Zionists played a pivotal role in President Donald Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital and relocate the U.S. embassy there, underscoring their significant sway in major foreign policy decisions concerning Israel. As such, Christian Zionists have emerged as a more powerful force within

the American political spectrum, making them a central entity to reckon with in the ongoing support and advocacy for Israel.

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§



Rationalization of Evil through Media: A Twitter Discourse Analysis on Israel's Genocide against Palestine after October 7

► Araştırma makalesi / Research article

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Abstract

Israel, which has settled in Palestinian territories since 1948 and has continued its expansionist policies for years, does not recognize the right to life for Palestinians in the region. Most recently, Israel declared war and killed forty-four thousand people in Gaza, citing the deaths and hostage-taking of Israelis in what Hamas called the "Aqsa Flood" attack on October 7. Israel insists that it will continue this war until the hostages are taken back. This study aims to reveal how the tension between Israel and Palestine, which has reached the level of genocide since October 7, has been transformed into a discourse in the Israeli media. The bureaucratic and rational presentation of Israel's conflict with Palestine through antisemitism is effective in legitimizing Israel's victims and actions in the mainstream media. For this reason, since October 7, the tweets of B. B. Netanyahu and US President Joe Biden and the official X accounts of the Office of the Prime Minister of Israel and Israel Defense Forces will be subjected to discourse analysis, limited to October-November. Israel has used many adjectives to appeal to humanitarian sentiments over the Israeli hostages, demonstrating that its security is in danger. Israel emphasized the threat of radical Islam by mentioning ISIS and Iran in addition to Hamas in a way to mobilize past sensitivities. By dehumanizing Hamas with labels such as "terrorist, human-animal", Israel legitimizes everything done to them. With this discursive background, it practices a systematic brutality unique to modernity. Thus, reality is distorted by the discourse constructed by Israel on social media and the world public opinion is forced to look at the Palestinian issue from the framework built by Israel.

Keywords: Palestine, Image of Islam, Discourse, Genocide, Threat

Medya Aracılığıyla Kötülüğün Rasyonelleştirilmesi: 7 Ekim'den Sonra İsrail'in Filistin'e Yönelik Soykırımına Dair Twitter Üzerinden Bir Söylem Analizi

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Öz

1948'den bu yana Filistin topraklarına yerleşen ve yıllardır yayımlacı politikalarını sürdüren İsrail, bölgedeki Filistinlilere yaşam hakkı tanımıyor. Son olarak Hamas'ın 7 Ekim'de "Aksa Tufanı" adını verdiği saldırıda ölen ve rehin alınan İsrailiileri gerçekçe göstererek savaş ilan etti ve Gazze'de kırk dört bin kişiyi öldürdü. İsrail, rehinelere geri alınana kadar bu savaşı sürdüreceğini ısrarla vurguluyor. Bu çalışma, 7 Ekim'den bu yana İsrail ile Filistin arasında yaşanan ve soykırım boyutuna ulaşan gerilimin İsrail medyasında nasıl bir söyleme dönüştürüldüğünü ortaya koymayı amaçlıyor. İsrail'in Filistin ile yaşadığı çatışmanın antisemitizm üzerinden bürokratik ve rasyonel bir şekilde sunulması, ana akım medyada İsrail'in mağdur ve eylemlerinin meşru gösterilmesinde etkili olmaktadır. Bu nedenle 7 Ekim'den bu yana İsrail Başbakanı Netanyahu ve ABD Başkanı Biden'in yanı sıra İsrail Başbakanlık Ofisi ve İsrail Savunma Kuvvetlerinin resmi X hesaplarından atılan tweetler Ekim-Kasım aylarıyla sınırlandırılarak söylem analizine tabi tutulacaktır. İsrail, İsraili rehinelere üzerinden insani duygulara hitap etmek için birçok sıfat kullanarak güvenliğinin tehlikede olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. İsrail, geçmiş hassasiyetleri harekete geçirecek şekilde Hamas'ın yanı sıra İŞİD ve İran'ı da zikrederek radikal İslam tehdidine vurgu yapmıştır. İsrail, Hamas'ı "terörist, insan-hayvan" gibi etiketlerle insanlıktan çıkararak onlara yapılan her şeyi meşrulaştırmaktadır. Bu söylemsel arka plan ile moderniteye özgü bir sistematik vahşet uygulanmaktadır. Böylece gerçeklik, İsrail'in sosyal medyada inşa ettiği söylemle çarpıtılmakta ve dünya kamuoyu Filistin meselesine İsrail'in inşa ettiği çerçeveden bakmaya zorlanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Filistin, İslam imajı, Söylem, Soykırım, Tehdit

Introduction

Palestine has been occupied by Israeli settlers for decades. Jews are organized around the idea of settling in the promised land (Zionism). Despite the Ottoman efforts to prevent the influx of Jews to the region, Jewish immigration, which began in the 19th century, gained a legal dimension with the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. Jewish immigration to Palestine increased steadily after World War II due to anti-Semitic practices against Jews. As a result of “Nakba” expulsion by Palestinians and neighboring countries who did not accept the two-state solution proposal, Israel further expanded its expansionism in the region. Palestinians and the Palestinian state, who have become refugees in the lands remaining on the Israeli side, are subjected to Israeli aggression and violence in violation of international law. Recently, tensions between Israel and Palestine have taken a new dimension with the October 7 attack by Hamas, the legal representative of Palestine, which resulted in the deaths of 1200 Israelis. Israel has continued to kill more than thirty thousand Palestinian civilians since October 7, citing the events and Palestinian hostages. The main problem of the article, Palestine’s victimizations which increased dramatically on 7th October, have been reflected as bias in mainstream media.

The tweets reveal how reality is distorted by creating the impression that Israel is right despite Palestine’s victimization through discursive construction. As a result of the outbreak of the Hamas attack, Israel tries to gain the support of international public opinion by declaring its victimization through “anti-Semitism”. On the other hand, Israelis subject Palestinians to systematic dehumanization and genocide. The research aims to make a deconstructive contribution to how Israel develops a discourse to legitimize this genocide against the Palestinian people, who are the main and dominant element of the region. Thus, by revealing the background of the discourse constructed by Israel in the mainstream media, it is stated that reality is distorted. The world public is forced to look at the Palestinian issue through the framework constructed by Israel.

In this framework, it is argued that the modern era, in which the dominance of human beings over things and others has increased, has deepened the dichotomy of self/other. This confrontational structure, which is the basis of national identity, makes it necessary to otherize someone as a threat. The security concerns of the nation-state against this security concern for others, especially nature, have increased nationalist and racist actions.

It tries to prove that it is a “victim” by resorting to adjectives that will mobilize conscience and emotions that are effective in changing people’s attitudes. By hiding behind the anti-Semitic conceptualization, Israel has ignited a holocaust against the Palestinians that has been going on for years. Israel differentiates between the Palestinians and Hamas, describing the latter as racist and fascist. It is classified; that Palestinians are considered civilians and innocent, while Hamas is characterized as terrorists. Going even further, Israel legitimizes the torture of the other by associating them with “personality disorders”. As can be seen, the strong link between language and action reveals that the way to ensure authority is through communication. Today, however, the link between word and action has been broken. Discourse can be constructed in a way that expresses something other than reality, or even the opposite.

National identity is a closed paradigm in conflict with life that believes only in the superiority of its belonging and does not recognize the existence of others. After the Jewish

and socialist threat, Islam, especially its radical part, radical Islam, has been portrayed as the whole of Islam. Radical Islam, symbolized darkly in the tweets, recalls Islamophobic perceptions of the political instability and mistreatment of women in the Islamic world. In the narrative, Israel uses emotionally mobilizing adjectives to portray itself and the hostages held by Hamas as victims and innocents. The conscience of international public opinion is mobilized by stating that the hostages are disadvantaged “women, children, the elderly”. The child hostages kidnapped by Hamas are portrayed as “axis and terrorists”. Adjectives such as “ruthless, fear, and darkness” are used to describe Hamas. Israel criticized the use of civilians as “human shields” against Israel. 16 years of tyranny, cruelly. In order to manipulate public opinion, which does not know Hamas well, Hamas is associated with the unrelated Isis and Iran. Thus, perceptions of radical Islam, which have been used against Islam since 9/11, are recalled by known groups.

Israel represents himself “victim”. Israel dramatizes that the attacks in /October caused great suffering and that the families of the hostages are worried for their relatives. It continues to claim that it fought the war in self-defense by rescuing hostages, even though it violated international law. Besides Israel claims to have taken precautions for Palestinian civilians to safety and humanitarian aid by using “life-saving” and “the largest, more” adjectives which increase effectiveness. All of these show how words, like magic, cover reality and mislead public opinion.

In research, it's used to discourse analysis as a method, to decipher background under Israel's discourse. Discourse analysis systematically investigates the explicit or implicit causal and deterministic relations between discursive practices, events, and texts and broader social and cultural structures, relations, and processes.

It seeks to reveal how such practices, events, and texts emerge, how they are ideologically shaped by power relations and power struggles, and how the power relations between discourse and society themselves operate as a factor that maintains power and hegemony.

A language constructs words physically, builds new worlds, and directs power relations. With a witnessed absolute domination of positivism, Structuralism gave rise to the interest in communicative methods.

Loss of the reliability of meta-narrative and absolute reality like science, emerged different subjective approaches. Especially in the struggle for the freedom of differences from the 1960s to the 1989s onwards, discourse/pragmatics's rising to prominence has been witnessed. After questioning structuralism, which consists of semantics, syntax, and semiotics in discourse analysis, pragmatics came to the fore under the dominance of poststructuralism. Discourse as carriers of sounds and symbols (word container, literal). focusing on the socio-cultural reality in its background, the structure is linguistics that reveals relationships. Discourse also claims that reality is multi-layered and can change according to the subject. Accordingly, with discourse analysis, deconstruction given structures. In the research, it is deconstructed Israel's formal image by presenting mainstream media like Twitter. It's emerged background of their tweets. What happens?

1. Legislation of Antisemitism with Exclusionary Adjectives: Hamas is the Nazis

Evil has existed since the beginning of humanity. However, modern times have witnessed the systematization of evil. The first mass evil was the massacre of Jews by the Nazis in

1933-1945, which was carried out on scientific grounds. This new situation, which is different from the exclusion of Jews throughout history, is known as the “Holocaust”. On the other hand, the Jews, who have been steadily increasing in Palestine since the 19th century, established a state around the ideology of Zionism for the first time in history.¹ Zionism is the ideal of re-establishing a state in the land of historical Israel, as promised to the Jewish race. Israel pursues an anachronistic attitude at the expense of ignoring the historical presence of Palestinians in the region.

Israel, financed by global capital, is presented as a politically and economically dominant figure in the region with strong media support. Today, the media, which has an undisputed influence on the formation of public opinion, constructs a discourse about Israel’s righteousness.

Jews, who were frequently subjected to exile and displacement throughout the historical process, faced a new exclusion in the 20th century when the uniformist character of the nation-state turned into oppression of differences. In the 1940s, when racist and fascist practices increased, the unique characteristics of Jews were reconstructed through extreme caricature and otherization. In Germany, the Nazis subjected disadvantaged groups such as Jews, disabled people, etc. outside the Aryan race to purges as non-Aryans. Racist ideology was tried to be legitimized based on the data of science (social Darwinism). Therefore, a non-existent relationship was established between the genetic characteristics of Jews and their behavior. By linking personality disorders to the Jews’ direct ethnicity, the crimes committed against them were legitimized. This legitimization was even further extended by recognizing that Jews are inhuman in their very existence. This resulted in a genocide in which the Jewish identity was targeted and destroyed en masse. The 21st century witnessed the irrational applications of modern rationalism that opened an irreparable wound in the conscience of humanity.²

The phenomenon of violence, which calls into question the claim that humanity has reached its most advanced and prosperous position in the modern period, reminds us of Adorno’s warnings to reconsider the value catalog of modernity. In the modern world, where relations are defined through conflict and power, powers maintain their sovereignty through discourse constructions. Today, the strong link between language and action reveals that the way to ensure authority is through communication. Power, which has replaced the measure of right and justice among people, has turned into domination over the weak and a function that conceals unjust practices. Jews have won popularity and power on antisemitism. This victimization is used by Israel who show your rightness in front of the public sphere. Its collision with Hamas is based on the enemy’s antisemitic desires against Israel.³

¹ Mîm Kemal Öke, “Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, Siyonizm ve Filistin Sorunu (1880-1914)”, *Marifet* 6 / 1 (2006), 263-264.

² Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernite ve Holocaust* (İstanbul: Sarmal, 1995), 133.

³ Afif Safieh, *In a Search of a Palestinian Identity* (Jerusalem: Passia Publications, 2005), 6.

2. Drawing a Conceptual Schema to Exclusion with Rationalization: Nation-State and Increasing Nationalisms

In modern societies shaped by the nation-state model, the state's attempt to strengthen its security by creating a constant perception of threat has led to an increase in nationalist and racist tendencies. These apartheid attitudes that emerge against the homogeneous and uniformist structuring of nations constitute a safety alarm for modern societies. Rational rationality's attempt to purge society of pests through social engineering has been realized through racism, which nationalism has carried to advanced dimensions. In the last two centuries, nationalism has erased the sacred past in which communities of many languages, religions, and races lived together and developed a system that focuses on the nation and its interests, thus excluding ethnic and religious differences. In the traditional universe where the multinational structure was dominant, differences were not perceived as a threat, nor were they forced to accept a superior religious identity. With the nation-state process, societies began to rediscover their own identity (self-respect) instead of the historical and geographical commonality of destiny.⁴ The new self-construction also seeks a suitable reference from the past to legitimize it in society (decomposition, reconstruction).

The nation, which henceforth becomes the new source of values and ethics, is legitimized by claiming that communities carry the substance in their essence. But science, which bases its relationship with nature on domination, is the product of a conflictual paradigm in competition with living beings. For this reason, the world has been the scene of war, migration, and displacement for the last century. Contrary to modernity's projection of a prosperous life, the mass, public, and systematic spread of evil has brought criticism of the modern paradigm. World War II, the Gulf Wars, the Bosnian war in the heart of Europe, Iraq, Syria, and Ukraine have all demonstrated nationalist perspectives can harm humanity unless they are registered with a transcendental reference.⁵ The latest of these is the massacre in Palestine, where war has been going on for years, which was initiated by Israel after Hamas attacked Israel like holocausts (ethnic cleansing) that threatened Jews in 1941-1945.⁶

One mass threat is the expansionism of communist ideology by the Soviet Union in the 1950s. Another threat was the expansionist policy of the Nazis in the center of Europe and their holocaust against the Jews⁷. As a matter of fact, with the media that developed in 1990, the Islamic geography was reconstructed in accordance with orientalist interests. Accordingly, Islamic countries began to be presented as a new threat to Western public opinion through representations of political instability and mistreatment of women.⁸ As far as can be seen, the Muslim society, which takes its reference from Islam, is associated with anarchy and disorder, while Islam is constructed as an identity that is opposed to the

⁴ G.E.Van Grunebaum, *Modern Islam the Search for Cultural Identity* (Newyork: Vintahe Books, 1964), 323.

⁵ Nagehan Kara, *İnsan-Doğa İlişkisinde Yaşanan Değişimler ve Sanata Yansımaları* (İstanbul: Işık Üniversitesi, Lisansüstü Eğitim Enstitüsü, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2022), 359.

⁶ Shabir Akhtar, *The Quran and the Secular Mind* (Newyork: Routledge, 2007), 229.

⁷ Bernard Lewis, "The New Anti-Semitism", *The American Scholar* 75/1 (2004), 25-36.

⁸ Sabine Schiffer - Constantin Wagner, "Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia - New Enemies, Old Patterns." *Race and Class* 52/3 (2011), 81.

West.⁹ This perception, created through the media, is reproduced in a context related to violence and terrorism through certain indicators related to Islam (veil, chador, repressed female image), and the Islamic world is shown as backward, gloomy, unreliable, and a threat to Western values.¹⁰

The media supported publications that cast doubt on Islam's sources of reference and criticized reactions to them because the Islamic world was an obstacle to free thought. The Gulf War was broadcast live on television, so it was the first time that people watched a war en masse and were indifferent to what was going on. The resistance of Muslims against the ongoing conflict in the region was portrayed as a threat with names such as Islamism and radical Islam. Lastly, the September 11 attacks have caused anxiety.¹¹

3. Discourse Analysis

3.1. Presentation of the “Other”: Hamas as a Threat

Israel associates itself with the Western value world. It can be seen in many tweets. One of them says that “the attack (on October 7) not only be done Israel, but also is in Paris, New York, and the whole world”.

“The crimes being committed today by Hamas - ISIS in Gaza will be committed tomorrow in Paris, New York, and all over the world.”((Prime Minister of Israel, 10.11.2023).

Westerners see Islam as part of the clash of civilizations. In particular, they associate the Islamic concept of jihad with violence and terrorism and characterize it as a threat to the West.¹²

“We both understand that the threat of radical Islam is a real one. It could endanger Europe; it could endanger the world. It certainly endangers us and our Arab neighbors.” (Netanyahu, 19.07.2018).

Israel links Hamas (with Iran), claiming that radical Islam¹³ poses a threat to the region. This name, given by Westerners to resistance movements against Western occupations in the Muslim world twenty or thirty years ago, refers to the extreme presentation of historical forms of religion under the name of Islam (Neo-Salafism). Thus, by associating Islam with concepts such as “extremism, violence, jihad” (radical Islam, Islamic Jihad), the negative perception of Islam in the media was reinforced. These forms, which the West occasionally supports in line with its interests despite seeing them as a danger to its civilization, are far from representing the entirety of Islam. The resistance of the Islamic world against the de facto occupation of the West with responses such as “jihad” borrowed from the Salafist

9 See, for many studies on antisemitism and Islamophobia: Enes Bayraklı- Oğuz Güngörmez, “İslamofobi ve Anti-Semitizm Karşılaştırmalarını Anlamlandırmak: Kapsamlı Bir Literatür Değerlendirmesi”, *Muhafazakar Düşünce* 14/53 (2018), 125.

10 Akbar Ahmed, *Islam Today. A Short Introduction to the Muslim World* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999), 217.

11 EUMC, *Summary Report on Islamophobia in the EU after 11 September 2001*, Christopher Allen - Jorgen S. Nielsen, 2002.

12 Bayraklı-Güngörmez, “İslamofobi ve Anti-Semitizm Karşılaştırmalarını Anlamlandırmak”, 125.

13 William Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (London: Westview Press, 2000).

tradition functioned to confirm and reproduce Western impressions of this geography. Israel, in turn, resorted to this definition to reactivate this sensitivity in Western societies¹⁴.

Israel has stated that it will play a role in the reconstruction and future of the region with the Western countries, especially with America as its financier. By stating that the interests of the Middle East are its own, it creates the image that it cares about the security of the region.

“The U.S. and our regional partners are working to build a better future for the Middle East - one where it is more stable and better connected to its neighbors. It benefits the people of the Middle East - and it would benefit us.” (Joe Biden, 25.10.2023).

America's support for Israel in reshaping the region is presented as being in favor of the Palestinians deciding their future.

“The United States remains committed to the Palestinian people's right to dignity and self-determination.” (Joe Biden, 24.10.2023).

The other is an important element in the construction of discourse. Otherization is realized by accepting in advance that the negative characteristics attributed to a nation are an integral part of its identity. The other is dehumanized by associating his/her crime with his/her “ethnic background”. The crime is made a part of the identity of the individual, even though there is no direct relationship between the behavior of the individual and his/her personality. Outgroups are thus subject to special consideration when it comes to crimes, as the community comes to mind as the primary perpetrator.”¹⁵ Below, Hamas, the legal representative of the Palestinians, and therefore the Palestinian people who democratically elected it to power, are humiliated by being reduced to a subhuman (animal) category.

“We stand before the next stage, it is coming. You know it and you are part of it; you are part of the vanguard. I greatly appreciate what you know how to do, your fighting spirit, your readiness to save our country from these animals, and I am certain that you will succeed.” (Prime Minister of Israel, 24.10.2023).

“We are fighting against human animals and will act accordingly,” (Israel Defense, 09.01.2023).

The construction of the discourse begins with the definition of the identity and belonging of the other who is seen as a threat. Then, with pronouns such as “the, this” that replace the other (article), the other becomes specific and informs us that the threat to our existence is very close to us. Moreover, in the text, positives are attributed to the self and negatives directly to the other. ¹⁶ In a tweet posted on the official page of the foreign affairs website, Hamas is described as a terrorist organization directed by Iran. In the following tweet, Iran is associated with “Satan, danger and terror” and it is claimed that Hamas is an extension of Iran. Thus, the dimensions of the danger increase even more.

“Hamas is an integral part of the axis of terrorism led by Iran, and this axis of terrorism and evil endangers the entire Middle East, and the entire Arab world as

¹⁴ Monica Bobako, “The Palestinian Knot; The ‘New Anti-Semitism’, *Islamophobia and the Question of Postcolonial Europe, Theory, Culture & Society*, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276417708859>,

¹⁵ Barış Çoban- Zeynep Özarslan, *Söylem ve İdeoloji* (İstanbul: Su, 2003), 99.

¹⁶ Çoban- Özarslan, *Söylem ve İdeoloji*, 70.

well. I am convinced that many Arab leaders understand this.” (Prime Minister of Israel, 12.11.2023)

In terms of how Israel presents itself, it characterizes its action against Hamas as military, implying that the operation was carried out on legitimate grounds. Israel has characterized its attacks since October 7 as war, even though it is fighting against an irregular army made up mostly of civilians. Israel claims that it is acting following international rules, stating that Palestinian civilians are protected under the law of war. Nevertheless, Israel blames the increasing number of “Palestinian civilian deaths” on Hamas’ use of civilians as “human shields” against Israel.¹⁷ In this way, Israel presents itself as rational, while the Palestinians are presented as a threat.

“While Israel does everything in its power to avoid harming civilians and urges them to leave the battle areas, Hamas - ISIS is doing all it can to prevent them from moving to safe areas and uses them as human shields.” (Prime Minister of Israel, 11.11.2023).

The discourse should reveal the conceptualization of self/other to legitimize its claim to truth. Discourse claiming truth needs the other to construct its own identity. While this exclusion is usually directed against the authorities, sometimes it is directed against migrants and refugees.¹⁸

In the tweets on Israel’s official page, it is seen that Israel uses the following concepts to express its opponents: The innocent: Civilians, Palestinians, Non-innocent: Hamas-ISIS terrorists, Hamas terrorists.

It is seen that the other is presented differently in the discourse. In its official tweets, Israel differentiates between Palestinian civilians and Hamas; Palestinians are considered civilians and innocent, while Hamas is characterized as terrorist. Israel states that its goal is to make the region safe by cleansing it of the “enemy” that threatens its existence.

“They are fighting an enemy embedded in the civilian population, which places innocent Palestinian people at risk.” (Prime Minister of Israel, 09.11.2023).

On the other hand, Israel claims that the safety of civilians is its top priority, yet it continues to attack mosques, hospitals, and civilian settlements.

“Hamas - ISIS is using schools, mosques, and hospitals as terrorist command centers. (Prime Minister of Israel, 10.11.2023).

However, Israel’s media language makes a distinction between civilians and terrorists. Thus, Israel creates the perception in the world public opinion that it acts following the international law of war and embraces universal human rights. This situation serves a function that conceals Israel’s human rights violations/crimes against Palestinians, which we can define as fabrication.¹⁹

“Israel is fighting Hamas terrorists, not the Palestinian population, and fully comply with international law” (Prime Minister of Israel, 10.11.023).

It is mentioned threat approached. One of how the us-them polarization is expressed in discourse is through the use of words that indirectly indicate the distance between the ingroup (us) and the outgroup (them). Accordingly, the name of the others is not

¹⁷ TÜBA, *Filistin-İsrail Savaşı Raporu* (Ankara: Türkiye Bilimler Akademisi Yayınları, 2023).

¹⁸ Çoban- Özarslan, *Söylem ve İdeoloji*, 82.

¹⁹ Çoban- Özarslan, *Söylem ve İdeoloji*, 61.

consciously mentioned; instead, they are referred to with demonstrative pronouns and labels to create the impression that the public already has a negative attitude towards this group. By referring to Hamas as “they”, Israel is suggesting that this publicly known threat is unpredictable.

“They were abducted & murdered in cold blood by human animals.” (Israel Defense, 09.01.2023).

Israel, technically superior and backed by the West, portrays itself as a victim under pressure and threat from the Palestinians, even though it is the innocent Palestinian people who suffer the most in the war.

The general validity of these typical or representative statements is expressed through the use of words indicating quantity (most, all) or time and frequency (always, constantly) or (everywhere). Generalization provides a convenient political basis for legitimizing the fight against threats and for manipulating the media, the electorate, and the police or the military to intervene. Israel’s concern for the region is expressed in broad terms below. The 16-year rule of Hamas has been characterized as tyranny, an expression of a long, oppressive period.

“To the leaders of the Arab states, leaders who worry about the future of their countries and the Middle East: You must come out against Hamas. In its 16 years of tyranny, Hamas has brought disaster to Gaza. It has brought only 2 things to the residents of Gaza: Blood and poverty.” (Netanyahu, 11.11.2023).

3.2. Presentation of Self: Israel Under Threat

The discourse utilizes figures and statistics to legitimize its claims.²⁰ Even if the number of people killed/wounded in the war does not even constitute one percent of the population, it reveals the extent of its victimization by sharing real figures with the public. The tweet below, without mentioning the number, is meant to express that Hamas’ attack had an impact on all people.

“Hamas - ISIS is cruelly holding our people hostage - women, children, the elderly - and thus committing a crime against humanity.” (Prime Minister of Israel, 11.11.2023).

It is applied for storytelling to “dramatize” painful memories. To make the narrative effective, the discourse resorts to narrativization in which actions, experiences, and situations are described in their entirety.²¹ For example, in short narratives, we encounter generalizations about what those who are under occupation and attack have to endure. The following is a narrative about children taken hostage by Hamas. In his tweet, the Israeli official shared his observations that children in need of protection were whispering in fear, hungry, thirsty, and facing mental/physical problems.

“I heard about thirst, about hunger, about mental and physical abuse, about young children who are still whispering out of fear, about the great darkness in which their loved ones are being held.” (Prime Minister of Israel, 05.12.2023).

In time, the excluded outgroup becomes a threat to the existence of the ingroup, and the ingroup becomes the victim of this threat. Israel, in the face of the attacks it is exposed

²⁰ Çoban- Özarslan, *Söylem ve İdeoloji*, 101.

²¹ Çoban- Özarslan, *Söylem ve İdeoloji*, 82.

to in these lands that it acquired as a result of struggle, also encourages its people to endure, and declares itself as a “victim” through suffering and victimization. Thus, through these victimizations, it receives the support it needs from public opinion.²²

“The faith and strength, and with everything that your family has endured and that you are enduring today, this is the challenge for the people of Israel. The land of Israel is acquired by tribulations. The pain is very great, but we will win thanks to this spirit.” (Prime Minister of Israel, 09.11.2023).

Israel’s starting attacks after Hamas’s threat, Israel says that behaves as an international law which saves civilians. This tweet mentions Israel’s creation of a safe space for wounded Palestinians and foreign citizens and the removal of foreigners from Gaza. This community, most of whom are American citizens, has a special meaning for Israel. Because Israel was founded with the support of Western powers. Serving the interests of these powers in the region, Israel has mostly usurped Palestinian lands. Israel bases its de facto presence in the region on a theological foundation and presents it as Zionism with an esoteric content. This ideology, mostly financed by American evangelicals, seeks to overcome obstacles to the establishment of the Great State of Israel.

“Today, thanks to American leadership, we secured safe passage for wounded Palestinians and for foreign nationals to exit Gaza. We expect American citizens to exit today, and we expect to see more depart over the coming days. We won’t let up working to get Americans out of Gaza...” (Joe Biden, 01.11.2023).

In another tweet, it is mentioned that “humanitarian aid vehicles are being deployed to the region for Gazan civilians, giving the message that civilians are being protected following the international law of war. Throughout the passage, the impact of humanitarian aid is increased with the adjectives “life-saving” and “the largest, more”.

“Yesterday saw the largest delivery of life-saving humanitarian assistance into Gaza so far, and more trucks are being cleared to enter today...But many more are needed...I’m not done pushing for more aid and will continue to support safe passage for Gaza civilians seeking safety.” (Joe Biden, 01.11.2023).

Conclusion

The set-up of the discourse is that of the dominant (me) and the weak (the other). Western domination of the world over the last two centuries has entailed a broad acceptance of the superiority of the Western paradigm. The perception of Muslims is that they are marginal, criminal, violent, victims, and sometimes unequal collaborators. Security is crucial for the construction of a new national identity. Another is needed to declare the outside as a threat. By completely dehumanizing the other, and the evil he/she has done, all kinds of violence and extermination are legitimized. The colonialism to which the Islamic world, the historical other of the West, was subjected, the bloodshed of the Arab lands, and the tragedy of Palestine, where the tragedy never ends, are all examples of this.

The colonialism to which the Islamic world, the historical other of the West, was subjected is responsible for the bloodshed in Arab lands and the tragedy in Palestine. In this study, based on the tweets of B.B. Netanyahu, Joe Biden, the Office of the Prime Minister of Israel, and the Israel Defense Forces on the X platform, the discursive background of the

²² Çoban- Özarslan, *Söylem ve İdeoloji*, 107.

genocide attempts and attacks against the civilian population in Gaza and how hate speech is constructed through the opposition of “self and other” are revealed. In the tweets, Israel presents itself as a victim under threat, while on the other hand, in its responses to Hamas, it expresses that it is making the utmost effort for the protection and safety of civilians. Israel manipulates the media by associating Hamas, the legal representative of the Palestinians, with the terrorist organization Isis, which is identified with radical Islam, even though Hamas is characterized as an enemy. Humanitarian adjectives (the elderly) are used when Israel expresses concern for the safety of the families of hostages held by Hamas, while such adjectives are the only ones used to describe the abundance of aid provided to Palestinian civilians. The adjective “innocent” was appreciated by the Palestinians, while Hamas was claimed to be jeopardizing the security of civilians by using them as “human shields”. Furthermore, Israel is alleged to have violated the international law of war by waging war on a civilian population, causing the deaths of thousands of innocent Palestinians. In contrast, Israel claims to be in favor of peace, security, and dignity for both communities, where Palestinians decide their future. It is seen to use humanitarian expressions while creating a public image that supports peace. Israel characterizes the Hamas attack that killed 1,400 people as “ethnic cleansing” and tries to portray its war to retrieve the hostages as “self-defense”. Israel says it will continue the war until the hostages are released.

Although Israel is de facto waging war against Hamas, from time to time it makes references to ISIS, Iran, and other anti-Western organizations that are well known in the public opinion, making foreign parties a party to the issue. At the same time, these references show that the war will not be limited to Palestine and serve as evidence that the Middle East, which is seen as the origin of radical Islam, will be reshaped. On the other hand, Israel makes frequent references to the US and Western countries and talks about their support.

Israel appreciates the struggle of its people for the Palestinian territories, which it says it acquired with difficulty. Claiming that it is the owner of this land where Palestinians have lived for centuries, Israel claims its rights to this land.

These discourse constructions that Israel used in the mainstream media to support its image of being right meant distorting/reconstructing reality in line with its interests. Therefore, while values such as rights and justice were mentioned, on the other hand, inhumane crimes were committed against Palestinians. With an image that consists of the rhetorical expression of values, Israel is trying to overcome the obstacles in front of the establishment of the Greater State of Israel following the ideology of Zionism and is dehumanizing the region by producing rational justifications for war.

Despite the mainstream media's support for the justification of Israel's attacks, the diversification of the media and the prevalence of social media has led to international reactions, mainly at the civilian level, to the centuries-old Palestinian tragedy and the recent massacre. These developments strengthen the hope that the mirror presented by the media and global powers will shatter and increase the search for the truth.

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The Concept of Time and the Future Perception of Zionism Based on the Messianic Doctrine: Forcing God into the Golden Age

► Araştırma makalesi / Research article

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Abstract

The doctrine of the Messiah in Judaism is a fundamental tenet of faith and the central pillar of Jewish eschatology. The belief that the Messiah will come in the end times to deliver the Jewish people has profoundly influenced Jewish sociology, psychology, and politics. In Jewish theology, time is linear and limited to 6,000 years, which also corresponds to the Hebrew calendar. This concept of finite time, combined with Messianic belief, has shaped the Jewish perspective on history and instilled a deep significance in the calendar. The Hebrew calendar illuminates both the Jewish past and, through the Messianic doctrine, their anticipated future. Jews believe they once experienced a golden age under the Kingdom of David and will live through a similar golden age in the future with the arrival of the Messiah, a descendant of David. Throughout the diaspora, Jews have awaited the Messiah, placing their hopes in this promise. By the 19th century, Zionism emerged, offering Jews the promise of redemption. Taking on aspects of the Messiah's role, Zionism provided a path of salvation through immigration to Palestine and the establishment of a Jewish state. Except for Religious Zionism, Zionists generally avoided aligning their ideology with Messianic beliefs. However, Religious Zionism framed itself as part of the Messianic deliverance. As Zionism achieved its objectives in Palestine, Religious Zionism began to radicalize, giving rise to Messianic Zionism. Messianic Zionism is apocalyptic, militant, radical, Kabbalistic, war-oriented, and aims to accelerate the end by interpreting contemporary events as the fulfillment of prophecies. Radical Messianic Zionists, believing that all prophecies must be fulfilled by human action for the Davidic Messiah to arrive, use mystical calculations to assert that the end is near. As a result, they pressure the State of Israel to engage in bloodshed and initiate war, seeing these actions not as choices but as essential conditions for Messianic Zionism.

Keywords: Zionism, Hebrew Calendar, Messiah, Apocalypse, Golden Age.

Mesih Doktrini Üzerinden Zaman Kavramı ve Siyonizmin Gelecek Algısı: Tanrı'yı Altın Çağ'a Zorlamak

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Öz

Yahudilikte Mesih doktrini temel bir inanç ilkesi ve Yahudi eskatolojisinin ana direğidir. Mesih'in ahir zamanda gelip Yahudi halkını kurtaracağı inancı Yahudi sosyolojisini, psikolojisini ve siyasetini derinden etkilemiştir. Yahudi teolojisinde zaman doğrusaldır ve İbrani takvimine de karşılık gelen 6.000 yıl ile sınırlıdır. Mesih inancıyla birleşen bu sonlu zaman kavramı, Yahudilerin tarihe bakış açısını şekillendirmiş ve takvime derin bir anlam yüklemiştir. İbrani takvimi hem Yahudilerin geçmişini hem de Mesih öğretisi aracılığıyla beklenen geleceklerini aydınlatır. Yahudiler bir zamanlar Davut'un Krallığı altında altın bir çağ yaşadıklarına ve gelecekte Davut'un soyundan gelen Mesih'in gelişine benzer bir altın çağ yaşayacaklarına inanırlar. Diaspora boyunca Yahudiler umutlarını bu vaade bağlayarak Mesih'i beklemişlerdir. 19. yüzyıl gelindiğinde, Yahudilere kurtuluş vaadi sunan Siyonizm ortaya çıkmıştır. Mesih'in rolünün bazı yönlerini üstlenen Siyonizm, Filistin'e göç ve bir Yahudi devletinin kurulması yoluyla kurtuluş yolu sağladı. Dini Siyonizm dışında, Siyonistler genellikle ideolojilerini Mesihçi inançlarla uyumlu hale getirmekten kaçınmışlardır. Ancak Dini Siyonizm kendisini Mesihçi kuruluşun bir parçası olarak çerçevelemiştir. Siyonizm Filistin'de hedeflerine ulaştıkça Dini Siyonizm radikalleşmeye başlamış ve Mesihçi Siyonizm ortaya çıkmıştır. Mesihçi Siyonizm kıyametçi, militan, radikal, Kabbalistik, savaş odaklıdır ve çağdaş olayları kehanetlerin gerçekleşmesi olarak yorumlayarak onu hızlandırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Radikal Mesihçi Siyonistler, Davud soylu Mesih'in gelmesi için tüm kehanetlerin insan eylemiyle yerine getirilmesi gerektiğine inanarak, sonun yakın olduğunu iddia etmek için mistik hesaplamaları kullanırlar. Sonuç olarak, İsrail Devleti'ne kan dökmesi ve savaş başlatması için baskı yapılar ve bu eylemleri bir seçenek olarak değil, Mesihçi Siyonizm için gerekli koşullar olarak görürler.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Siyonizm, İbrani takvimi, Mesih, Kıyamet, Altın çağ.

Introduction

The belief in a savior, present across many religions, finds its counterpart in Judaism through the doctrine of the Messiah. In Orthodox Judaism, belief in a "Son of David" Messiah who will arrive at the end of days to deliver the Jewish people is fundamental. Thus, in Judaism, the Messiah is synonymous with redemption and salvation, forming the core of Jewish eschatology. The condition from which Jews anticipate deliverance is exile, a state they believe God has ordained as a form of tribulation with a limited timeframe. The concepts of exile and atonement are fundamental to the doctrine of the Messiah. According to Jewish theology, when the Jewish people have atoned, the exile will end, and God will send the Messiah. At this appointed time, the Jews will return to Eretz Israel under the Messiah's leadership and experience a golden era reminiscent of the Davidic Kingdom. Consequently, the belief in the Messiah connects the past, present, and future, leading Jews to deeply value the concepts of time and history. This messianic belief and the perception of time mutually shape Jewish concepts of time, history, and calendars. The perception of time in Judaism is linear and finite, extending over 6,000 years, which also aligns with the Hebrew calendar. According to Jewish scholars, the 6,000 years began with creation and will culminate in an apocalypse. Toward the end of this period, during the last days, the Son of David will arrive and lead the Jews into an era of peace centered in Jerusalem.

The strong anticipation of a savior in Jewish society has manifested repeatedly, as evidenced by numerous false Messiahs or messianic movements throughout the early centuries, the Middle Ages, and the modern era. The emergence of these messianic events is not surprising, given the religious motivations alongside the reality that Jews in the diaspora faced hostility and significant challenges. For instance, in Europe, Jews contended with anti-Jewish sentiment throughout the Middle Ages and later with anti-Semitism. Consequently, while religious arguments underpin the messianic belief, the long-standing hope for redemption and a savior can also be seen as a practical necessity.

There is a natural connection and relationship between this state of necessity and Zionism. Emerging in the 19th century, Jewish Zionism was a modern Jewish national independence movement that promised salvation to the Jewish people. Between its early appearances in the first half of the 19th century and its institutionalization by the end of the century, Zionism presented itself as a form of salvation, integrating religious doctrines into its ideology. Zionist theorists and leaders advocated that following this political, national, and ideological path was the only way to ensure the survival of Jewish identity, both racially and religiously. However, during this early period, before dividing into various branches, Zionism refrained from presenting itself as a messianic movement, actively avoiding such a portrayal. Thus, Zionism positioned itself as a form of salvation, but one focused on building a bright future rather than a messianic vision of the end times, offering the Jewish people a form of deliverance in the here and now. This self-presentation began to change after the First Zionist Congress, with Zionism's institutionalization leading to various ideological branches, including Religious Zionism. By the first quarter of the 20th century, the rabbis representing Religious Zionism asserted that the Zionist movement aligned with messianic salvation, urging devout Jews to join based on their religious beliefs. Through this narrative, Religious Zionism transformed into a messianic movement, finding support among observant Jews. This interpretation represents one of Zionism's radicalization points, marking the roots of Messianic Zionism and radical religious Zionists. Additionally, these

interpretations show that Zionist Jews approached Zionism with varying degrees of religious commitment. Some Jews supported Zionism based on secular ideas and worldly needs, viewing the ideology as a means of salvation. Meanwhile, others embraced it from a religious perspective, seeing Zionism as a path to spiritual deliverance. These differing views also reveal contrasting perceptions of time within the Zionist movement.

This article focuses on clarifying the nature of the connection and relationship between Zionism and the Jewish doctrine of the Messiah, shedding light on the Zionist perception of time and future aspirations. The study will specifically examine the religious dimension of Zionists' political ideals, their vision for the future of the Middle Eastern region, and the ways religious Zionists radicalized to actualize this vision, impacting their communities in spiritual and mystical terms. The first section will explore the concepts of time and the Messiah doctrine in Jewish theology, establishing a foundational context. The second section will provide an overview of Zionism, concentrating on Religious Zionism. The analysis will then focus on Messianic Zionism's nature, its temporal perspective, emphasis on prophecy, and its tendency to interpret events as signs of the end times. The article aims to present the subject through a descriptive approach, while also attempting to address it from a historical phenomenological perspective.

1. The Concept of Time and the Messiah Doctrine in Jewish Theology

The primary factor shaping the concept of time in Judaism is the Torah. Based on the Torah, Jewish scholars believe that time has both a beginning and an end. Thus, the perception of time in Judaism is linear and finite. This linear time began with God's creation of everything from nothing and will conclude after a specific period. The rabbis adopted this 6,000-year period as their calendar to serve as a reference with three equal ages of 2,000 years. Thus, the 6,000-year lifespan of the world corresponds to the Hebrew calendar and is reflected in the Tanakh. Specific years in the Hebrew calendar align with stories of human expansion, the Flood, and the Tower of Babel. The events pertaining to the Jewish people are the most significant entries in the calendar. It is essential to note that the concepts of limited time and the Hebrew calendar, as shaped by the Tanakh, interact and interrelate with the ideas of redemption and the end times in Judaism.

The great exile, seen as a divine punishment due to the Jews' abandonment of the Torah, marks the beginning of the last 2,000-year period. Although this period began with the adversities of exile and punishment, Jewish scholars have named it the Messianic Age and regard it as the end of times. In parallel, they developed a hope that once the Jews atone for their transgressions, they would be freed from exile and restored to a glorious state, experiencing a golden age like the past. Drawing from certain passages in the Tanakh, such as Joel 3 and Amos 9:11-15, that they interpret as prophecies, scholars concluded that redemption would occur in the end times through a divine messenger. As a result, the doctrine of the Messiah has taken a deeply rooted position in Jewish theology and eschatology, placing the belief in a Messiah at the core of Jewish hopes and expectations for the future. Thus, the Hebrew calendar not only reflects the past but also sheds light on how Jews perceive the present and their expectations for the future.

1.1. The Hebrew Calendar Shaping Time and History in Judaism

Jewish scholars have drawn from the Torah to outline a limited and linear timeline, assigning a lifespan of 6,000 years to the world. In their view, each day of creation corresponds to 1,000 years on Earth, thus the lifespan of the world is 6,000 years.¹ The seventh day of creation, the Shabbat, represents the seventh millennium; however, during this millennium, the world will be desolate and deserted. Scholars categorize the 6,000 years into three ages of 2,000 years each. According to this classification, the period from year 1 to 2,000 is characterized by humanity's failure to understand God and its rebellion, hence this period is referred to as the "Age of Failure."² The next 2,000 years, beginning with Abraham and concluding with the destruction of the Second Temple, is known as the "Age of the Torah." During this age, the Torah adorned the Earth. To illustrate these two ages with examples: in the year 1, the world and the first human were created; Abraham was born in 1948; the First Temple was destroyed in 3338; the Second Temple fell in 3829; and the Great Exile began in 3894. The years 3829 or 3894 also signify the beginning of the third age. The third 2,000-year period is called the "Messianic Age," which will be the final era before the world to come. Towards the end of the Messianic Age, the Messiah will arrive on Earth and will lead the Jews into a golden age like their past.³ An important aspect regarding the lifespan of the world is that it is not definitively set at 6,000 years. Jewish scholars have speculated that this period has diminished due to humanity's sinfulness. In these interpretations, the world's lifespan has been estimated to be a minimum of 4,250 years and a maximum of 5,850 years.⁴

Another significant detail is the duration of the period that will be experienced with the coming Messiah towards the end of the 2,000-year period. There are different interpretations within Jewish tradition regarding this matter. Some rabbis suggest that this period will last for 40 years, others for 60 to 70 years, some for 400 years, and others still believe it will last for three generations.⁵ Thus, there is no clarity regarding the duration of the years lived with the Messiah in the Hebrew calendar, but it is widely accepted that this period will end with the death of the Messiah. Immediately after the Messiah's death, all people on Earth will also die. Following this, the world will remain silent and desolate for seven days. After these seven days, the day of resurrection and reckoning will occur. To provide a contemporary perspective on this topic, it should be noted that in October 2024, the Jews entered their new year, which corresponds to the year 5785 in the Hebrew calendar.

1.2. The Messiah Doctrine in Jewish Theology

The belief in the Messiah is one of the fundamental tenets of Jewish theology and is closely related to the doctrines of exile and atonement. The architect of Orthodox Judaism, Rambam/Maimonides, shaped the fundamental tenets of Judaism in 13 principles, as outlined in his work *Mishneh Torah*. In the Sefer Shoftim section of his book, Rambam stated that anyone who does not believe in the coming of the Messiah is also denying the Torah and, thus, does not have faith. The development and deep-rooted establishment of

¹ *Babylonian Talmud* (used 10 October 2024), BT- Ros HaShanah 31a.

² *Mishnah, Seder Nezikin, Pirkei Avot* (used 10 October 2024), 5: 2, 5:3.

³ BT-Sanhedrin 97a.

⁴ BT- Sanhedrin 97b.

⁵ BT- Sanhedrin 99a.

the Messiah doctrine in Judaism can be attributed to the exiles and hardships experienced, particularly the Babylonian Exile. Jews believe that they were punished with destruction and exile due to their sins, but they also hold that if they repent and adhere to the Torah, they will atone for their sins and eventually experience a glorious period of sovereignty in Jerusalem, both physically and politically. To achieve this, they believe that God will surely send them a savior. This expectation and these thoughts can be seen reflected in the Bar Kokhba revolt, which resonated with some Jews in ancient times. The destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE and the complete expulsion of Jews from Jerusalem by the Romans in 135 CE solidified the belief in salvation and the coming of a redeemer. Jewish scholars have interpreted the numerous promises in the Tanakh that God would deliver His people from exile and restore them to Zion as a divine promise to the Jews. Moreover, because God is just, He will ultimately save the Jews in the future, as He previously rescued the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. Throughout the diaspora, defined as a period of atonement, Jews have consoled themselves with the expectation of the Messiah and shaped their religious lives around this belief.

1.2.1. Jewish Sacred Texts Mentioning the Concept of the Messiah

The term "Messiah" is derived from the Semitic root verb "Mašah/Mesaḥ," which means "to anoint" or "to smear with oil." Its complete equivalent in Hebrew is "ha-Mašhi'ah." The term Mašhi'ah means "anointed one," referring to someone consecrated for a specific role, particularly in religious duties, as someone upon whom God has laid His hand to bestow a task.⁶ This term appears four times in the Torah in narratives related to Moses and Aaron. These accounts include information about Moses consecrating certain objects, Aaron being anointed with oil, and the requirement for Aaron's sons to also be anointed.⁷ However, it can be said that the occurrences of the term Mašhi'ah in these narratives do not serve as direct roots for the belief in the Messiah. Yet, Jewish scholars believe that some passages in the Torah, where the term Mašhi'ah does not appear (for example, Genesis 12:5, 15:9-11, 49:8-11), are symbolic narratives that provide insights about the Messiah. Thus, in the rabbinic perspective, the Torah serves as a source for the belief in the Messiah. Additionally, the term Mašhi'ah appears 20 times in the Nevi'im and 14 times in the Ketuvim. From some of these passages, it is understood that the individuals who were anointed as Messiah were special figures chosen and appointed by God, such as prophets, kings, and priests. Among these figures, David, referred to as the Messiah in II Samuel 23:1, is considered the most significant in the context of the belief in the Messiah. It can also be said that individuals who have a close relationship with God are identified as Messiahs.

In several passages where the term Mašhi'ah appears, there are strong narratives that lay the groundwork for expectations of future salvation and the development of the belief in the Messiah. Particularly in the prophetic books following the Babylonian exile, the concepts of salvation and the deliverer are abundantly illustrated.⁸ As read in the books of Isaiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel, two main figures emerge at the center of these narratives: David and the

⁶ Jacques Waardenburg, "Mesih", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 2004), 29/306-309.

⁷ *Tanakh* (used 12 October 2024), Leviticus 8:10-12, 16:32, Exodus 30:30, 40:13.

⁸ Isaiah 11:12, 12:2, Ezekiel 36:24-28, Joel 3:17, Obadiah 1:15-21, Habakkuk 3:18, Zephaniah 3:14-20, Zechariah 14:1-21.

Kingdom. The Israelite prophets during and after the exile repeatedly prophesied that God would return the Jews in exile to the Land of Israel, send a king anointed from the lineage of David, and that this king would lead the Jews just as David did, rebuilding the Davidic Kingdom, or Israel. For instance, in Amos 9:11-15, it is stated: “In that day ‘I will restore David’s fallen shelter...and will rebuild it as it used to be... and I will bring my people Israel back from exile...” These passages convey the understanding that the Messiah will elevate the Jews to a golden era of kingship, reminiscent of David’s time. Furthermore, because these books contain both Messianic and prophetic narratives, they are crucial references in Jewish eschatology.

The Talmud and other religious texts also contain substantial information about the Messiah. In the Babylonian Talmud, the Messiah is generally referred to as the “Messiah, son of David,” while in the Jerusalem Talmud, he is called “Son of Judah,” and in the Targums, he is referred to as “King Messiah.”⁹ According to the rabbis in Babylon, the name of the Messiah, son of David, is one of seven elements designed before creation; his name existed even before the sun and will always exist; thus, he will come at the end of days.¹⁰ Additionally, the Messiah, son of David, is depicted as a teacher, prophet, warrior, peacemaker, high priest, and an eschatological king.¹¹

1.2.2. The Identity, Qualities, and Duties of the Messiah

Jewish tradition associates the Messiah with King David, referring to him as “the Messiah, son of David.” In Jewish theology, the Messiah, who will come from the tribe of Judah, is also known by less commonly used names such as Shiloh (*peace-bringer*), Yinon, Hanina, and Menahem.¹² He is one of six individuals who have been blessed with a special *berakhab*, similar to Moses and David, and like all prophets, he is considered innocent and sinless.¹³ Although the Messiah, son of David, is an anointed figure, he is not a supernatural being and will be born and die like any other human.¹⁴ The duties attributed to the Messiah in Jewish tradition are generally as follows: the Messiah, son of David, will be sent by God in the end times to gather the Jews from exile and bring them back to the Land of Israel, defeat Israel’s enemies, establish a theocratic state, reign over the world, govern humanity with the Torah, rebuild the Temple, and establish God’s kingdom on Earth. Therefore, the Messiah, son of David, corresponds to the concept of salvation as a religious and eschatological savior who will lead the Jews into a golden age in the end times. However, it is also important to emphasize that the Messiah, son of David, is merely an intermediary for ultimate salvation. It is not the Messiah who will bring salvation to the Jews; that role belongs solely to God.¹⁵

The Messiah is also at the center of Jewish eschatology. Indeed, the timeframe in which events related to the Messiah occur in the Tanakh is generally defined as the Day of the Lord,

⁹ *The Targum of Onkelos and Jonathan Ben Uzziel on the Pentateuch: Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy*, (London: Longman, Green Longman, Roberts and Green, 1865), 19.

¹⁰ BT- Pesachim 54a, Nedarim 39b

¹¹ BT- Sanhedrin 98b-99a

¹² BT- Sanhedrin 98b.

¹³ BT-Sanhedrin 93b.

¹⁴ Mircea Eliade, *Dinsel İnançlar ve Düşünceler Tarihi II* (İstanbul: Kalcı Yayınevi, 2012), 293.

¹⁵ BT- Sanhedrin 51b.

referring to the end times.¹⁶ It should be emphasized that the book of Isaiah is a primary source concerning the Messiah and eschatology. Unlike other texts, this book associates the imagery of salvation and the savior not with the present or near future but with a completely different age. In Isaiah, prophecies about the return of the Jews from exile, the rebuilding of the Temple, and the governance of nations by the Torah are linked to the end times, thereby imparting an eschatological character to the Messiah.¹⁷ This narrative has been repeated, interpreted, and developed by subsequent prophets.¹⁸ Additionally, it is important to note the significant role of the book of Daniel in the context of the Messiah and eschatology. The book of Daniel, notable for its metaphorical narratives, provides powerful eschatological expressions that give the Messiah, son of David, a corresponding form in this regard.¹⁹

1.2.3. The Timing and Signs of the Messiah's Arrival

The Messiah, son of David, will come at the end of the last 2000-year period of the Messiah Age in the Hebrew calendar.²⁰ Jewish scholars believe that the events of creation and exodus provide clues regarding the timing of the Messiah's arrival, focusing on two possibilities: the months of Nisan and Tishri.²¹ Notably, the month of Nisan has been more favored, as it was during Nisan that God delivered the Jews from slavery in Egypt, and it is believed that the Messiah will ultimately redeem them in the future as well.²² These general predictions about the timing of the Messiah's arrival are indeed speculative, as Jewish religious authorities maintain that the exact date of the Messiah's coming is one of the seven things hidden from humanity, making it unknowable and unpredictable.²³ What is accepted with certainty is that the son of David will be sent by God at a time deemed appropriate by Him. Scholars believe that there is wisdom in keeping this knowledge hidden from humans, which is why calculations and predictions regarding the Messiah's arrival are prohibited. Some rabbis have even cursed those who attempt to make such predictions.²⁴ However, these prohibitions have not deterred Jewish mystics, especially after the expulsion from Spain in 1492, who made calculations regarding the timing of the Messiah's arrival and provided specific dates.

In Judaism, it is believed that not only is it impossible to know the date of the Messiah's arrival, but it is also unattainable through human actions. The only qualification for Jews in this context is to fulfill their religious duties. According to rabbinic thought, Jews can achieve atonement by performing their religious obligations, thereby earning God's favor and potentially hastening the arrival of the Messiah. Conversely, failing to perform *mitzvot* (commandments) and engaging in wrongful actions can delay His coming. From a theological perspective, the period of waiting for the Messiah is seen as a time of striving during exile. Jews are called to fulfill all the commandments applicable outside of Eretz

¹⁶ Tremper Longman et al. (ed), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Daniel- Malachi* (Michigan: Zondervan Academic, 2009), 357.

¹⁷ Rodrigo F. De Sousa, *Eschatology and Messianism in LXX Isaiah 1-12* (New York: T-T Clark, 2010), 6-7.

¹⁸ Eliade, *Dinsel İnançlar ve Düşünceler Tarihi II*, 289.

¹⁹ Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel* (Tennessee: B&H Publishing, 1994), 50-51.

²⁰ BT- Megilah 3a.

²¹ BT- Ros HaShanah 11a.

²² BT- Eiruvin 43b.

²³ BT- Pesachim 54b.

²⁴ BT-Sanhedrin 97b.

Yisrael (the Land of Israel). Thus, faith and piety are the sole factors that can facilitate and accelerate the Messiah's arrival.²⁵ This required piety encompasses repentance, charity, prayer, good deeds, and the observance of mitzvot. If Jews wish for the Messiah's coming, they must understand why they are in exile, express remorse, repent sincerely, and engage in acts of charity.²⁶ In summary, Jews must await God's sending of the son of David Messiah by fulfilling their religious duties. This approach is referred to in Jewish tradition as "passive waiting."

In Jewish theology, any actions aimed at hastening the arrival of the Messiah or speeding up the end times are strictly forbidden. Transitioning to an active form of waiting is considered inappropriate, as it reflects a lack of trust in God's decree and an infringement upon His rules. Such actions would only serve to delay the Messiah's arrival further.²⁷ Violating the Sabbath, failing to foster social unity, neglecting mitzvot, and sinning are behaviors that would postpone the coming of the Messiah. Additionally, an increase in the number of individuals turning away from religion, stinginess, neglecting the poor, and instigating wars are all classified as actions that would delay the timing of the Messiah's arrival.²⁸

As mentioned, calculating the time of the Messiah's arrival is not considered appropriate according to tradition. However, some prophetic narratives in the Tanakh provide hints regarding the events leading up to the Messiah's arrival, allowing for an understanding or intuition about its proximity. Jewish eschatology contains numerous insights and interpretations about what the pre-Messiah era will be like and what signs might indicate His impending arrival. These interpretations suggest that in the period just before the Messiah's coming, the world will experience numerous negative developments. Evil will spread across the globe, irreligiosity will increase, sinfulness will reach its peak, and despair will dominate. Believers will be humiliated, the youth will show disrespect, animals will become valued over human life, governments will fall into corruption, prices and consumption will rise, human dissatisfaction will grow, blessings will diminish, diseases will proliferate, scholars will become scarce, refugees will increase, and people will migrate without receiving compassion.²⁹ Natural disasters will escalate, the sun will darken, the waters of the Jordan River will turn to blood, Galilee will be destroyed, and Jerusalem will be in ruins. This prophecy indicates that the world will experience great chaos just before the Messiah's arrival.

These prophetic hints serve as indicators of the Messiah's coming. In Jewish theology, this pre-Messianic era, referred to as "the end of days" or "the end of time," will witness three significant events that will signify the imminent arrival of the Messiah: the war of Gog and Magog, the coming of the Messiah son of Joseph, and the arrival of the Prophet Elijah. According to Jewish eschatology, a war named Gog and Magog will break out before the Messiah comes, leading to the destruction of all nations.³⁰ Although there are varying interpretations regarding this war, it is viewed as one of the birth pains of the Messiah, rather than a conflict in which He will take part. Gog is the king of a land called Magog, located in

²⁵ BT-Sotah 49b.

²⁶ BT-Sanhedrin 97b, BT-Yoma 86b, BT-Shabbath 151b.

²⁷ BT-Sanhedrin 92b.

²⁸ BT-Niddah 13b, BT-Eiruvin 86a.

²⁹ BT-Sanhedrin 97a, BT-Sotah 49b.

³⁰ BT-Sanhedrin 17a, Ezekiel 38-39.

the far north of Israel, and he will unite many nations to attack Israel. As an atheist, Gog will wage war against the faithful, making this conflict a direct rebellion against God.³¹

During this religious war, the Shekhinah (divine presence) will descend to earth, fighting against Gog and his forces, punishing enemies with plagues and floods. The Jewish people will be protected by God during this conflict, while other nations will suffer great losses.³² Ultimately, Gog and his allied enemies will be defeated in the Land of Israel, and following this war, which will serve as part of their atonement, the Jewish people will no longer experience captivity.³³ Moreover, this war will lead many nations to believe in God.

The second significant event will be the arrival of the Messiah from the tribe of Joseph, known as the Messiah son of Joseph. According to some scholars, he is said to come "riding on a donkey" and will be sent to announce the arrival of the Messiah son of David, who will come "amidst the clouds," as well as to prepare the right conditions for His arrival.³⁴ The Messiah son of Joseph will emerge in Galilee and cleanse Jerusalem from Roman occupation. However, afterwards, a figure named Armilus (the Antichrist) will invade Jerusalem, accompanied by ten kings, driving the Jewish people into exile from Zion, killing some and taking others captive, ultimately leading to the death of the Messiah son of Joseph.³⁵ During this period of suffering, the Jewish people will face division, with many abandoning their faith and only a few remaining steadfast in belief. Ultimately, God will destroy Armilus and his army.

The third and final significant event will be the coming of the Prophet Elijah. According to Jewish eschatology, Elijah will be sent by God at the end of days, arriving three days before the Messiah. On each of these days, he will announce different messages: the first day will herald the coming of peace, the second will proclaim the advent of goodness, and the third will declare the arrival of salvation. Elijah will find the 10 lost tribes and bring them to Eretz Israel³⁶. After the arrival of the Messiah, Elijah will become the high priest, teach the new law to the people, and serve as a reconciliator among the Jewish community.³⁷

1.2.4. Messianic Kingdom

When the Jewish people have completed their atonement and, more importantly, at the time determined by God, the Messiah son of David will come. He will arrive in Bethlehem or Hebron, or in a location between the two, and from there, he will proceed to Jerusalem. In Jerusalem, the Messiah will wear the crown of kingship and begin his mission to serve humanity. As God's representative on Earth, he will proclaim God's message, teach the Torah, and govern the entire world from Zion with the Law (Isaiah 2:4). He will be the ruler and king of the whole world, guiding all of humanity toward a religious way of life. God will show mercy to all humanity, especially to the Jewish people, through the Messiah, leading to beautiful, positive, and even extraordinary developments during this time. There will be peace and justice throughout the world, particularly in Eretz Israel. Wars and murders will

³¹ BT- Avodah Zarah 3b.

³² BT- Megilah 11a.

³³ BT-Sanhedrin 97b, BT-Megilah 17b.

³⁴ BT- Sukkah 52a-b.

³⁵ Jacob Klatzkin, "Armilus", *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 2007), 2/474-475.

³⁶ Deuteronomy 30:4.

³⁷ BT-Baba Metzia 20a.

cease, weapons of war and oppression will be destroyed, and no one will go hungry. On the other hand, it is worth noting that certain rabbis including Maimonides interpret the Messianic Era as one that will not necessarily bring about extraordinary occurrences, suggesting that the only significant change will be the end of exile, with Jews returning to Eretz Israel and establishing their sovereignty there.³⁸

If we were to list the positive developments that the Jews will experience with the Davidic Messiah; the exile will end, all exiles, including the lost ten tribes, will return to Eretz Israel, they will become the sole heirs of the land, the borders of the promised land will be completed, extending to the Euphrates, Jerusalem will expand, reaching the gates of Damascus, the Kingdom of Israel will be re-established as a theocratic state, regaining its former glory, Jerusalem will be the capital, and the temple will be rebuilt for the third time.³⁹ Once the temple is built, the Shekhinah will once again dwell in the Holy of Holies.⁴⁰ The Jews, due to the coming of the Messiah, will be able to live their religion properly and will attain all the blessings promised to them by God; they will no longer sin and will be wise.⁴¹ Because God will pour His spirit upon them through the Messiah (Joel 2:28-29), the Jews will be freed from their injustices, selfishness, and jealousy; they will conquer their egos and will elevate their souls. There will be no arid land left in Eretz Israel; wine will flow from the mountains, there will be abundance and blessing, no disasters will occur, there will be wealth, wolves will live alongside lambs, and hunger, unhappiness, disease, and infertility will cease.⁴²

All the nations that have oppressed the Jews, especially Rome, will be destroyed. Other nations, if they wish, will also step into a beautiful era like the Jews. Because the Davidic Messiah will introduce God to all people and will enable some to believe. Thus, the nations will believe in and practice the Torah, and the Messiah will be their king and prophet as well.⁴³ Those who do not accept the Torah will be punished. More importantly, the entire family of Abraham, especially the descendants of Ishmael and Esau, will believe in the Torah, thus completing their own atonement and uniting with Israel.⁴⁴

2. The Nature of Salvation and the Time of Salvation in Zionist Ideology

Zionism is a form of Jewish nationalism that emerged in Europe in the 19th century. The term was derived in 1890 by Nathan Birnbaum from the word "Zion," one of the names of Jerusalem in the Tanakh.⁴⁵ Historical data shows that the early seeds of Zionist ideology appeared in the first half of that century. Some Jews, referred to in the literature as "Zionist Pioneers," laid the groundwork for Zionism and became its origins. These pioneers expressed the necessity of Jewish revival in a way that would inspire the theorists and leaders of

³⁸ BT-Berachoth 34b. Menachem Kellner, "And the Crookes Shall be Made Straight: Twisted Messianic Visions, and A Maimonidean Corrective", *Rethinking the Messianic Idea in Judaism*, ed. Michael L. Morgan et al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 121-122.

³⁹ Alexander Zephyr, *Rabbi Akiva, Bar Kokhba Revolt, and the Ten Tribes of Israel* (Bloomington: IUniverse LLC, 2013), 36.

⁴⁰ BT- Megilah 29a, Yoma 72a, 77b, Pesachim 5a.

⁴¹ BT- Shabbath 151b.

⁴² Isaiah 35: 6, 32:15, 51:3, 11:6, Joel 2:26, 3:18.

⁴³ Menachem Kellner, *Maimonides on Judaism and the Jewish People* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991), 39.

⁴⁴ Kellner, *Maimonides on Judaism and the Jewish People*, 38.

⁴⁵ Gideon Kouts, "Zionism", *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 2007), 21/539-540.

Zionism, advocating for the establishment of a new nationalist Hebrew identity, the collective migration of Jews to Palestine, and the establishment of a Jewish state. Their ideals gradually strengthened and spread over time, ultimately being named by Birnbaum. Thus, the institutionalization process of ideology began. In this context, Theodor Herzl is the most significant figure. With the First Zionist Congress he organized in 1897, Zionism gained a specific program, became institutionalized, and developed into a substantial ideology, thus expanding its influence. Therefore, it is appropriate to outline the historical process of Jewish Zionism with the following milestones: Jewish Zionism began with Zionist pioneers in Europe in the first half of the 19th century, was named in 1890, institutionalized in 1897, and became official in Palestine in 1948.

Zionism has promised salvation to the Jewish people. This promise is filled with goals such as creating a Hebrew language revolution, establishing a national Hebrew identity, collectively migrating Jews to Palestine, establishing a nationally independent Jewish state there, and thereby making a return to history. After 1948, it also aimed to protect Jews under the umbrella of a state and to build a prosperous future for them while establishing sovereignty over all the promised lands. It is evident that these promises of Zionism regarding salvation and existence do not carry an eschatological character. From a general perspective, it can be said that these promises indicate that Zionism offers Jews a bright future in political, military, and economic terms in this time and place, without referring to the Messiah, the end of days, or ultimate salvation. However, this does not mean that Zionism does not utilize the belief in the Messiah and the parameters within this doctrine. Secular or non-religious Jews have pragmatically referred to the subtopics, provisions, and prophecies of the belief in the Messiah when necessary, employing this doctrine along with beliefs in the promised land and the chosen people. On the other hand, it should be noted that there are also Zionists who do not fit this generalization. In the early period of Zionism, the religious leaders within the ideology believed that they were living in the end times. Therefore, although Zionism was not directly related to the ultimate salvation that the Messiah would bring for them, it was considered part of that process. It has been observed that this perspective of Zionist religious leaders changed after the first quarter of the 20th century, and Zionism began to be directly associated with the belief in the Messiah. As a result of this connection, a form of Zionism known as Messianic Zionism emerged from Religious Zionism. Messianic Zionism centers on the theme of the end times, seeking to accelerate the end, and attempting to realize the ultimate salvation and the coming of the Messiah through political and military actions. It defines all events as signs and associates them with prophecies, considers the occurrence of wars and negative events as prerequisites, and places great importance on Kabbalah. Messianic Zionism, with its theology, has led to the emergence of fanatical radical religious Zionists and particularly increased their numbers after 1967.

2.1. Definition, Characteristics, and Goals of Zionism

The simplest definition of Zionism is Jewish nationalism or the modern Jewish national independence movement. However, when examining the characteristics, structure, and goals of the Zionist ideology, it becomes clear that its most accurate definition is "theological

colonial nationalism."⁴⁶ Although Zionism was formulated by Jews living in different regions of Europe, who therefore had different backgrounds, the common denominators in this formulation are the concepts of salvation/freedom and anti-Semitism. Despite emancipation, the integration failures experienced by Jews in Western Europe, along with pogroms affecting Jews in Eastern Europe, pushed them to seek an exit or path to freedom, leading to the establishment of their own nationalist ideology. In other words, anti-Semitism and the hope for salvation are the factors that contributed to the emergence of the ideology.⁴⁷ Popular intellectual movements in Europe during the 19th century—such as nationalism, national identity, a return to history, and the concept of the nation-state—can also be listed as factors that led to the emergence of this ideology. Moreover, it is a fact that each of these factors serves as building blocks for Zionism. Indeed, Zionism is an ideology that emerged in Europe, and most of its theorists adopted Western values. To elaborate, a large percentage of the Jews who formulated Zionism were individuals who embraced Western values, felt a sense of belonging to the European countries they lived in rather than to Zion, and sought to escape their Jewish identities to become part of the West. When they were unable to achieve this, they created their own nationalist ideology to gain the approval of Europe. Consequently, the building blocks of Zionism, formulated by Jews with these characteristics, naturally included Western values such as nationalism, colonialism, and hegemony.⁴⁸

In the 19th century, nationalism, a return to history, national identity, and the concept of the nation-state, which were increasingly strengthened by racial theories in Europe, served as a role model for Jews in formulating their own ideology. Zionist theorists, including the pioneers, asserted that Jews, who were suffering various hardships in the diaspora, were an ancient people and that they should have their own land and state. Accordingly, they believed that it was essential for Jews to gain a national character, arguing that the Hebrew revival—and, more importantly, their salvation—could only be achieved through this identity. Zionism, which promises salvation to Jews, has shaped its goals through this vision and mission. The initial objectives of Zionism can be summarized as follows: creating a nationalist Hebrew identity, establishing Hebrew as the national language, collectively migrating Jews to Palestine, and founding a national and independent Jewish state. Thus, Zionism is a people- and land-centered ideology. Moreover, it is important to emphasize that the religious factor played a significant role in the strengthening of Zionist ideology and its ability to achieve its goals. In fact, Zionism was not constructed solely on secular concepts and practicalities; every building block of the ideology has been intertwined with Jewish religious doctrines. This transformation has made Zionism more than just a political thought or form of nationalism; it has turned it into a theopolitics. According to nearly all experts, this move is the greatest factor that distinguishes the ideology and leads it to success.

⁴⁶ Amnon Raz Krakotzkin, "A National Colonial Theology Religion, Orientalism and The Construction of The Secular in Zionist Course", *Etnisizität, Moderne und Enttraditionalisierung*, ed. Moshe Zuckermann (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2002), 312.

⁴⁷ Derek J Pensler, "Anti-Semites on Zionism: From Indifference to Obsession", *Anti-Semitism and Anti-Zionism in Historical Perspective: Convergence and Divergence*, ed. Jeffrey Herf (London: Routledge, 2007), 14-25.

⁴⁸ Guy Bajoit, "Siyonizm ve Emperyalizm", *Siyonizm ve Irkçılık*, ed. Türkkaya Ataöv (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilimler Fakültesi Yayınları, 1982), 146-147.

Zionists, like all forms of nationalism, required and placed maximum importance on the concepts of history, people, land, and state. To meet these needs, they turned to the Tanakh in a practical and pragmatic manner, using Jewish religious doctrines. In fact, they found the history they sought for their nationalism, the model of people they sought to create a new Hebrew identity, and the land they sought for migration and state-building in the Tanakh.⁴⁹ Zionists asserted that they were a chosen and sanctified people, tracing their ethnic identity back to Abraham, thus incorporating the belief in the chosen people into their ideology. By also claiming that Palestine, centered around Jerusalem, was their land, they placed the belief in the promised land at the foundation of their ideology. Zionists regarded the Tanakh as a document that narrates Jewish history, establishing their history on an ancient past and asserting that it is a sacred history.⁵⁰ Selectively and judiciously, Zionist historians wrote a glorious history and a golden age for Jews, focusing only on the successes of the Israelites in Palestine as described in the Tanakh, while ignoring the exiles, destructions, and defeats. This historical narrative creates an impression of an unbroken and linear connection from King David to the modern era, that is, to Zionism, for the Jews. Through this constructed history, the Zionists aimed to highlight how organic, ancient, and strong the bond between the Jews and Palestine was, promoting the perception that Palestine is the homeland and property of the Jews.

Moreover, one of the most important objectives of the Zionists was to demonstrate that the Jews had experienced a golden age in Eretz Israel in the past, thus proving that Zionism and the future it would establish would also be bright. Indeed, Zionists selectively focused on the successful periods in Eretz Israel, particularly the migrations of Abraham and the Exodus, as these were directed towards Zion. Thus, by shaping their ideology with the metaphors of "Exodus and Zion," the Zionists also provided an explanation for their past golden ages. This means that despite various difficulties in ancient times, Jews who migrated to Eretz Israel lived their most glorious periods with King David in Zion, and if they wish to experience such an era in the future, they too must "exit" and go to Zion, like their ancestors.

Zionists, who claim that returning to Jerusalem is a religious duty, argue that this land is the country where their ancestors lived and that it was given to them by God as a perpetual inheritance. They strengthen their claims by stating that God will not go back on His promises as outlined in the Torah, asserting that the land belongs to them and that it awaits their return. They assert that the history of Palestine was written only as long as the Jews lived there and that their return fulfills their duty to the land. In trying to invalidate the divine punishment of exile, Zionists called on the Jews with the slogan "a land without a people for a people without a land," effectively nullifying the Palestinians and defining them as a historyless and unfortunate mass.⁵¹ In simpler terms, for the Zionists, Palestinians do not exist, and therefore Palestine is empty. This is one of the explanations for why Zionism is characterized as a colonial and hegemonic ideology. As previously mentioned, Zionism is a

⁴⁹ Shlomo Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism: The Intellectual Origins of the Jewish State* (New York: Basic Books, 2017), 16.

⁵⁰ Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism*, 14.

⁵¹ Rashid Khalidi, "The Formation of Palestinian Identity: The Critical Years, 1917-1923", *Rethinking Nationalism in Arab Middle East*, ed. James Jankowski et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 171-191.

colonial settlement movement. As many experts indicate, a settler-colonial ideology implies the eradication of the indigenous population.⁵²

Realizing that they would not achieve success merely by migrating to Palestine, Zionists employed the belief in the chosen people to create a new Hebrew identity. They claimed that the Jews, as descendants of Abraham, are a chosen, superior, and holy people, asserting that this identity can only find meaning and existence in Eretz Israel. To this end, they first initiated a Hebrew language revolution. Subsequently, to create a nationalist identity, they changed the names of every Jew migrating to Palestine to names from the Tanakh, such as Abraham, Joshua, and David. To foster social unity, they referred to the Jews migrating to Palestine as Hebrew initially, and later as Israelis once the state was established. The memories of the Jews who migrated to Palestine were infused with the myths of being a chosen, superior, and even holy people, along with the history written by the Zionists. Thus, Zionism achieved its goal of creating a new Hebrew identity with a nationalist character. This infused memory is, in fact, one of the most significant factors that ensured Zionism's persistence and permanence in Palestine. The kibbutzim, where this new nationalist identity was shaped, also led to the creation of Zionist underground organizations, which were key to establishing a Jewish state in Palestine.⁵³ Over time, it became increasingly evident that some Zionists, whose memories were infused with nationalism and fighting in the kibbutzim, turned to racist and fascist ideologies, particularly after the late 1940s. All these developments mark the emergence of a new Jewish typology, which had not been observed before (except for some events in ancient times). The radical, fanatic, and racist Zionist Jewish typology was born in the kibbutzim established in Palestine. Later, this typology was further influenced by Religious Zionism, resulting in the emergence of fanatic religious racist Zionists.

2.2. The Emergence of Religious Zionism and the Production of Messianic Zionism

Zionism is an ideology formulated by Jews living in various regions of Europe who, despite holding different worldviews and religious beliefs, united on common grounds such as nationalism and liberation. This diversity led to the branching of Zionism into various sub-groups, including "Labor, Religious, Cultural, Political, and Revisionist" Zionism. Especially after 1897, it became clear that the religious and secular views of Zionist theorists were reflected in their versions of Zionism, resulting in a clear division within the movement. While this division slowed down some decision-making processes within the Zionist movement, it ultimately strengthened it. Each branch acted as a complementary and supportive component, enhancing the ideological capacity for action and enabling the movement to appeal to various segments of the Jewish community. The first sub-group that emerged from Zionism is Religious Zionism.

Among the pioneers of Zionism, including figures like J. Alkalai and Z. Kalischer, there are also rabbis who have played a significant role in the movement. Zionist rabbis have not only facilitated the adoption of the ideology within their communities but have also been highly influential within the movement itself. Although the involvement of rabbis and

⁵² Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native", *Journal of Genocide Research* 8/4 (2006), 387-409.

⁵³ Anita Shapira, "Where Has 'the Negation of Exile' Gone?", *Alpayim: A Multidisciplinary Publication for Contemporary Thought and Literature* 25 (2003), 9-55.

religious individuals has caused some discomfort among the secular factions, decision-makers, particularly Theodor Herzl, recognized the importance of rabbinical support and stated that the participation of religious leaders was essential for the movement.⁵⁴ One way this ideology, which is intertwined with Jewish religious doctrines, gained legitimacy was through the revision of religious commandments by rabbis. Zionist rabbis introduced new rulings concerning exile, atonement, and messianic doctrines, most importantly nullifying the “Shaloş ha-Şvuot/Three Oaths” found in the Talmud, to which Jews had adhered for centuries.⁵⁵ These oaths prohibited collective Jewish immigration to the promised land, the establishment of a state, and the establishment of political sovereignty. The Zionist rabbis declared that these oaths had lost their validity in light of contemporary developments. The alignment of Zionism’s objectives with these oath provisions indicates that Zionists viewed Jewish tradition as null and void. At this juncture, the role of the rabbis in mitigating objections was crucial. Zionist rabbis reduced anxieties within their communities regarding the violation of the Three Oaths and messianic beliefs by offering new religious interpretations, thereby encouraging Jewish participation in the movement. They reassured their communities that Zionist ideology was not a messianic movement aiming for ultimate salvation but was rather an effort to save the Jews from extinction. According to their claims, participating in this ideology was the only way for Jews to ensure their continued existence.

Analyzing the role of rabbis in shaping and supporting Zionist ideology up to the first quarter of the 20th century reveals that their motivations were primarily rooted in religious concerns. The effects of emancipation led to the assimilation of Jews, with many abandoning their faith. In response, some rabbis, seeking to adapt to these conditions, established new sects that, like Zionism, disregarded crucial aspects of Judaism. This context made nationalism, nation-states, immigration, and statehood significant concepts for these rabbis, leading them to adopt a Zionist stance. Rabbis who aligned with Zionism believed that if Jews remained in their current circumstances, both Judaism and the Jewish people would soon face extinction. To prevent this, they argued that Jews had no alternative but to become nationalists like other peoples and establish their own state. These rabbis, motivated by this mindset and concern, collaborated with secular Zionists, becoming one of the most vital pillars of the Zionist movement. This collaboration can be interpreted as an attempt by religious and secular Zionists to tolerate one another despite their differences. Zionist rabbis grew weary of other theorists’ secular approaches, which sought to create a Jewish identity detached from religious elements and aimed at establishing a secular state. They realized that their efforts to counter this secular ideology would not succeed.⁵⁶ They believed that this attitude would not lead Jews back to Judaism; instead, the assimilation problem would merely shift, ultimately resulting in the disappearance of Judaism. Over time, as their tolerance for the secular framework waned, rabbis began to formulate their own version of Zionism based on religious beliefs, leading to the emergence of Religious Zionism as the first sub-branch of the movement. Religious Zionism can be described as a movement aimed at

⁵⁴ Michael Brenner, *In Search of Israel: The History of Idea* (United Kingdom: Princeton University Press, 2018), 82.

⁵⁵ BT- Kethuboth 110b-111a.

⁵⁶ Shalom Linker, *Kibbutz Judaism: A New Tradition in the Making* (Pennsylvania: Associated University Press, 1982), 93.

creating a national and religious Hebrew identity, aspiring to establish a state governed by Jewish law (halakha) and characterized by a devout societal structure.⁵⁷

Rabbi Y. Reines, a pivotal figure in the Religious Zionist movement and recognized as the first official rabbi of Zionism, founded the Mizrahi Party in 1902 in Lithuania with the support of other rabbis. This event marked the formal beginning of Religious Zionism. Operating under the auspices of the World Zionist Organization, Mizrahi adopted the slogan "The Land of Israel is for the People of Israel," promising Jews the opportunity to fully live the Torah in Jerusalem and to establish religious Zionist yeshivas in Palestine.⁵⁸ Religious Zionism sought to create a harmonious connection between halakha (Jewish law) and ideology, aiming to secure acceptance of the movement among religious Jews. This effort was, to some extent, successful. It can be argued that Religious Zionism positioned itself as an extension and continuity of halakha, reinforcing the idea that "Zionism is Judaism." The establishment of Religious Zionism can thus be viewed as an attempt to demonstrate that the movement was not only a political and national initiative but also a legitimate religious one.⁵⁹

In Jewish theology, the concepts of salvation and the redeemer correspond to the belief in the Messiah. This dynamic presents a significant challenge for Religious Zionism and has led to internal shifts within the movement. It is useful to divide the relationship of Religious Zionism with the Messianic belief into two distinct periods: one where Zionism is emphasized as a non-Messianic movement and another where it is declared to be a Messianic movement. Until the first quarter of the 20th century, Zionist rabbis repeatedly emphasized that Zionism is not a messianic movement. Including the pioneers, Zionist rabbis claimed that they were living in the end times, asserting that all developments indicated the imminent arrival of the Messiah. Therefore, they argued that the Jewish people needed to fulfill their responsibilities, which was connected to collectively returning to Eretz Israel, or physical effort.⁶⁰ Thus, in their view, the coming of the Messiah required the Jews to be Zionist and to return to Palestine. This can actually be interpreted as the Zionist rabbis moving from a passive waiting for the Messiah in the Jewish tradition to an active expectation. Despite these interpretations, the rabbis insisted that Zionism does not hasten the end, that it has nothing to do with the ultimate salvation brought by the Messiah, and that it is not a messianic movement.⁶¹ They also criticized anti-Zionist rabbis who accused them of rebelling against the Messiah belief and rejected these accusations.⁶² Zionist rabbis stated that they only wished to await the Messiah by returning to Jerusalem and that they did not play a savior role. However, it is also a fact that Zionist rabbis interpreted current social and political developments as signs and issued new religious rulings based on them. For instance, it is known that the Balfour Declaration played a significant role in the dindar Zionists'

⁵⁷ Chaim Weizmann, *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann* (Jerusalem: Transaction Publishers, 1984), 46.

⁵⁸ Itzhak Goldshlag, "Mizrachi", *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 2007), 14/389-390.

⁵⁹ Linker, *Kibbutz Judaism*, 93.

⁶⁰ Anita Shapira, *Land and Power: The Zionist Resort to Force, 1881-1948* (California: Stanford University Press, 1992), 33.

⁶¹ David Novak, *Zionism and Judaism: A New Theory* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 235.

⁶² Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism* (Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 34.

overcoming the “three oaths” rule.⁶³ Furthermore, it is known that some rabbis joined Zionism to hasten the end.⁶⁴

Although Religious Zionism has avoided presenting itself as a messianic movement, it has been viewed as such by Jewish religious individuals because it shares in the tasks of the Messiah and promises salvation. Indeed, Zionism has called upon Jews to embrace the belief in the Messiah and his messianic powers to achieve the concrete realization of salvation.⁶⁵ As a result, some Jewish religious individuals have completely opposed Zionism, while others have welcomed it positively. Consequently, it can be understood that the concerns of anti-Zionist rabbis opposing the ideology from the very moment Zionism emerged were justified. This is because, through the efforts of Rabbi Abraham I. H. Kook, Religious Zionism began to transform into a messianic movement, completing this transformation in a short period. Thus, Messianic Zionism emerged.

Rabbi Kook is a turning point for Religious Zionism. Immigrating to Palestine as a Zionist in 1904, Kook viewed Zionism as a two-part movement: Zionism and Jerusalemism. In his thought, Zionism is the political aspect of the movement and will ensure the physical revival of the Jews, but it is not sufficient on its own. Jerusalemism will provide the spiritual and mystical resurrection of the Jews, and without this resurrection, the physical revival holds no significance. It is a natural consequence that Kook, considered an important religious scholar, made mystical connections while shaping his own ideology, especially given his Kabbalistic background.⁶⁶ Rabbi Kook claimed that they were living in the end of days and that the arrival of the Messiah was imminent; therefore, it was essential for the Jews to return to Jerusalem quickly. In his view, the new settlements established by the returning religious individuals would act as a holy center of attraction, drawing other Jews to Eretz Israel as well as the end of days like a magnet. Kook interpreted Zionism as a sign that the end of days had arrived, asserting that there was a very powerful messianic light within this movement.⁶⁷ According to him, Zionism is a messianic movement that initiates the process of salvation, facilitates the final redemption, and ensures the coming of the Messiah.⁶⁸ According to Kook, when Jews are Zionist, they will take on a messianic mission. That is, Jews must create a center of attraction by being Zionist and immigrating to Jerusalem to draw the Messiah to the world like a magnet. He believed that only God knows why these actions must be taken for the coming of the Messiah.⁶⁹ Drawing mystical conclusions from Jacob's vision (Genesis 28:12), Kook stated that Zionism needs Jerusalem to achieve its goals. Because the ladder they must have for their ascension is on Mount Moriah.⁷⁰ He claimed that by using this ladder, they would achieve their earthly goals and that the state they would

⁶³ Dov Schwartz, *Religious Zionism History and Ideology* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2009), 35.

⁶⁴ Steven V. Mazie, *Israel's Higher Law- Religion and Liberal Democracy in The Jewish State* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2006), 24-25.

⁶⁵ David Biale, *Gershom Scholem Kabbalah and Counter-History* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1982), 107.

⁶⁶ Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook, *Orot* (Jerusalem: Maggid Books, 2015), 108.

⁶⁷ Kook, *Orot*, 163-164.

⁶⁸ Yakov M. Rabkin, “Religious Roots of a Political Ideology: Judaism and Christianity at the Cradle of Zionism”, *Mediterranean Review* 5/1 (2012), 84.

⁶⁹ Kook, *Orot*, 161-162.

⁷⁰ Kook, *Orot*, 202.

establish would be the Messianic Kingdom of Israel.⁷¹ Moreover, he made inferences that this kingdom would also benefit other peoples. In his thought, Israel is a blessing for the world in every respect.⁷² However, Kook's statement that Israel is a blessing for the world does not imply that his approach to other peoples is positive or peace-loving. Indeed, it is known that he supported violent actions, bloodshed, and war for the coming of the Messiah, adopting an exclusionary and hostile attitude toward Palestinians and raising and inciting religious Zionists in this context.⁷³

As a result, Rabbi Abraham Kook defined Zionism as a messianic movement, imbuing the movement with eschatological and mystical characteristics, and thus creating Messianic Zionism. For this reason, he is regarded as “the first example of the extraordinary combination of religiosity and Zionism.”⁷⁴ In other words, Kook is the individual who brought forth radical Messianic Zionism. This also indicates that he serves as a root for fanatical religious Jewish Zionists. Indeed, his ideology, referred to as “Kookist theology,” has been carried on by his son and successors, becoming increasingly radicalized over time.⁷⁵ It is an undeniable fact that Messianic Zionism played a role in the establishment, preservation, and continuation of Israel.⁷⁶

Rabbi Kook's ideology was fully realized by his son, Yehuda Kook.⁷⁷ Kook succeeded in establishing a broad community with his father's theology, and with the support of his constituency, he founded the “Gush Emunim/Faith Bloc.” This organization has a vision of resettling all Jews in Palestine and a mission to achieve this, if necessary, through war and bloodshed. Additionally, many radical religious Zionist groups have been established in Palestine, inspired by Kookist theology. All these radical and fanatical groups completely reject universal, humanistic, and liberal values, arguing that Palestine should exclusively belong to the Jews and that Muslims and Christians should not be granted equal rights.⁷⁸ Their goals and doctrines can be outlined as follows: “The messianic fervor attached to the sanctity of a Greater Israel, the construction of the temple in the area of the Muslim holy sites in occupied East Jerusalem, governance of the state by theocracy, and the establishment of Jewish political sovereignty throughout Eretz Israel.”⁷⁹

⁷¹ Kook, *Orot*, 122-127.

⁷² Kook, *Orot*, 113-115.

⁷³ Zvi Zinger Yaron ve Benjamin Ish-Shalom, “Abraham Isaac Kook”, *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 2007), 12/289-293.

⁷⁴ Shlomo Avineri, “Zionism and Jewish Religious Tradition: The Dialectics of Redemption and Secularization”, *Zionism and Religion*, ed. Shmuel Almog et al. (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1998), 4.

⁷⁵ Schwartz, *Religious Zionism History and Ideology*, 77.

⁷⁶ Novak, *Zionism and Judaism*, 244-245.

⁷⁷ Motti Inbari, *Messianic Religious Zionism Confronts Israeli Territorial Compromises* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 21.

⁷⁸ Nur Masalha, *The Bible and Zionism: Invented Tradition, Archaeology and Post-Colonialism in Israel-Palestine* (London: Zed Books, 2007), 138.

⁷⁹ Masalha, *The Bible and Zionism*, 138

2.3. The Perspective of Religious Zionism on Time and the Interpretative Approach of Zionist Rabbis to Prophecies

As previously mentioned, Jewish religious leaders were among those who conceptualized Zionism. The formulation of a nationalist ideology promising salvation to the Jewish community or its support by rabbis appears paradoxical in the context of the belief in the Messiah. However, for Zionist rabbis, this is not a contradiction; rather, in their view, the signs of the times necessitate the Jews' revival through the embrace of nationalism. In fact, according to the rabbis, the belief in the Messiah, in a sense, requires one to be nationalist; therefore, it is not difficult for Jews, who have lived for centuries in isolation, to adopt nationalism. In other words, the belief in the Messiah has provided a very conducive ground for the interaction between the thoughts of rabbis and religious individuals about nationalism.⁸⁰ Furthermore, it seems that the eschatological thinking parallel to the belief in the Messiah has also contributed to this favorable environment. Indeed, the views on time held by the religious leaders who conceptualized or supported the movement, including its pioneering rabbis, are common. In their opinion, the world is approaching the end of the eschatological period; therefore, the arrival of the Davidic Messiah is also very near.

From its first representative to the present day, all Zionist rabbis have believed they are living in the end times, defining social, political, military, and even religious developments as the footsteps of the Messiah. They have thought that the prophecies are beginning to be fulfilled and have claimed that the arrival of the Davidic Messiah is imminent. Some Zionist rabbis including Kook believed that the prophecies should happen spontaneously, considering that the process of the Messiah's arrival has already begun. However, once Religious Zionism positioned itself on a messianic plane, it polished the eschatological character of the movement significantly. In particular, messianic Zionists have closely aligned the movement with the sub-paradigms of the belief in the Messiah, made moves to hasten the end, and supported warfare and bloodshed.

To analyze the perception of time among Zionist rabbis and their method of interpreting signs in the context of prophecies, one must go back to the 1820s. The year 1825 corresponds to 5585 in the Hebrew calendar, marking the beginning of a period when the pioneers of Zionism declared their ideas with messianic enthusiasm. When calculating the future based on the Hebrew calendar from the stated year, it is understood that there is a maximum of 415 years left until the apocalypse in Jewish theology. Therefore, it is entirely normal for all Jewish religious leaders during those years to believe they were living in the end times and to feel excited about the imminent arrival of the Messiah. What is abnormal, however, is that some religious leaders made mystical calculations to provide specific dates, worked towards the fulfillment of prophecies, and issued new rulings that were highly contrary to tradition. Although few religious leaders were exhibiting such behavior in the 1820s, their discourse and actions were influential. These rabbis were the pioneers of Zionism, and their prophetic-sounding rhetoric, combined with secular ideals, effectively permeated the minds of a segment of the Jewish community.

Rabbi Alkalai, a pioneer of Zionism who believed that the era with the son of David Messiah would last 400 years, claimed in the 1820s that they had reached the end of the

⁸⁰ Ze'ev Levy, "Yahudi Milliyetçiliği", *Yahudi Felsefesi Tarihi*, ed. Daniel Frank et al. (Ankara: Hece Yayınları, 2018), 769.

Messianic Age and that all developments were a sign of the Messiah's approach. In his view, the rise of nationalism and the nation-state concept, the decline of empires, and the assimilation of Jews leading them to abandon their religion were indicators of the Messiah's imminent arrival. Evaluating all political and secular developments of his time in this context, Alkalai made mystical calculations and announced that the son of David Messiah would come in 1840. According to Alkalai, the Jews needed to fulfill their responsibilities within the 15 years leading up to the arrival of the son of David Messiah. He believed that the Messiah would not descend from heaven suddenly; rather, the process of redemption would occur in stages, and human action was necessary for this redemption.⁸¹ Rabbi Alkalai asserted that this action must pass through repentance. However, it is understood that his conception of repentance differed significantly from Jewish tradition. According to Alkalai, the Jews could only repent by collectively returning to Eretz Israel.⁸² Any other form of repentance would have no meaning at the end of times. Therefore, as they approached ultimate redemption, the Jews' sole imperative was to return to Jerusalem. Alkalai urged the Jews to take action, advising them not to rely solely on God. Alkalai, who stated that redemption would occur in stages, also found another prophecy, claiming that the son of Joseph Messiah would soon come.⁸³ When the son of Joseph Messiah arrives, he will lead the Jews back to Jerusalem in a nationalist manner. Alkalai's interpretation marks the first intersection of Jewish nationalism with the doctrine of the son of Joseph Messiah, a convergence that would become increasingly intertwined over time. With the return to Jerusalem alongside the son of Joseph Messiah or, as understood, through Zionism, the Jews would strengthen socially, politically, and economically, thus prompting God to send the son of David Messiah.

Another figure who viewed the 19th century with Messianic enthusiasm was Rabbi Kalischer, a pioneer of Zionism. Coming from a well-known Kabbalist family, Kalischer incorporated his mystical calculations into his evaluations of developments in Europe, asserting that the end times had begun and that all signs indicated the footsteps of the Messiah and the warning of a catastrophic end. Nationalism and popular uprisings were among these signs, while the suffering of the Jews and their material successes were the most significant indicators. Kalischer linked the conditions of the diaspora with the Egyptian exile, claiming that like their ancestors, they had suffered for years and had always repented, thus asserting that the time for redemption had come. The greatest evidence of this timing, as highlighted in the Torah (Genesis 14:15), was that some Jews were wealthy enough to buy the world. Although Kalischer was a Kabbalist, he paradoxically advised Jews to abandon their fantastical thoughts and not to expect miracles. He noted that the expectation for God to perform a miracle by suddenly bringing the Messiah to earth was a mistaken belief.⁸⁴ Kalischer argued that action was necessary for the ultimate redemption to begin, emphasizing the need to return to Eretz Israel and asserting that true repentance in the end

⁸¹ Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism*, 16.

⁸² Getzel Kressel, "Alkalai, Judah ben Solomon Hai", *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 2007), 1/663-664.

⁸³ Shapira, *Land and Power*, 4.

⁸⁴ Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism*, 16.

times required collective return. Thus, the Jews' return to Jerusalem before the coming of the son of David Messiah was essential for his arrival.⁸⁵

The end-times thinking, calculations, and the Messianic excitement with which these two important pioneers approached the developments of their time represent a significant turning point. Indeed, some rabbis were influenced by this system of thought, adopting, supporting, and eventually developing it over time. This led to the emergence of rabbis eager to take significant steps to hasten the end. The most famous early example in this context was Rabbi S. Mohilever, who supported Hibbat Zion, while Rabbi Kook became prominent during the years when Zionism made a qualified appearance in Palestine.⁸⁶ Kook serves as the most important role model regarding end-times thinking and efforts to hasten the end.

Compared to the previous century, the developments of the 20th century were much more concrete and destructive, significantly amplifying the Messianic enthusiasm among Zionist rabbis, who were eager to associate these events with prophecies. The Bolshevik Revolution, the weakening of the Ottoman Empire, the Balfour Declaration, World War I, the massive destruction caused by the war, the use of advanced technology such as ships, tanks, and planes during this conflict, and Palestine coming under British control were all interpreted as Messianic signs.⁸⁷ It would not be inaccurate to say that Kabbalist Rabbi Kook played a leading role in interpreting these events within the framework of prophecy and shaping public perception.⁸⁸ In Kook's thought, Zionism is inherently a part of God's plan for redemption, having descended from the higher realm to the material realm (*malchut*) as a prophecy.⁸⁹ Drawing from the metaphors of darkness and light, Kook argued that in the end days, a silent movement filled with contradictions, darkness, and light would emerge, striving to bring Israel to the brink of redemption.⁹⁰ This assertion refers specifically to Zionism. In parallel, Kook claimed that Zionism itself was the realization of a prophecy, having already manifested the second great sign in 1882. The waves of *aliyah* that began in 1882 were seen as a powerful indication of the imminent coming of the Messiah and the "visible lights of the end."⁹¹ The third great sign, according to Kook, was World War I, which he described as the "Gog and Magog" war and asserted that it had erupted for the Jews' redemption. He expressed that World War I, having "wonderful and magnificent hope," was a war deliberately initiated by God, presenting a great opportunity for the Jews and necessitating the breaking of the devil's power through bloodshed and loss of life.⁹² Viewed through this lens, it could be said that Kook wanted the war to be exceedingly destructive and bloody. During this opportunity, he urged the Jews to act wisely, achieve tangible successes, gain courage, and most importantly, recognize the signs that God had sent them.⁹³

⁸⁵ Shapira, *Land and Power*, 33.

⁸⁶ Yosef Salmon, "Zionism and Anti-Zionism in Traditional Judaism in Eastern Europe", *Zionism and Religion*, ed. Shmuel Almog, et al. (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1998), 26.

⁸⁷ Schwartz, *Religious Zionism History and Ideology*, 35-79.

⁸⁸ Kook, *Orot*, 150-151.

⁸⁹ Schwartz, *Religious Zionism History and Ideology*, 29-32.

⁹⁰ Kook, *Orot*, 163-164.

⁹¹ Kook, *Orot*, 121.

⁹² Kook, *Orot*, 121.

⁹³ Kook, *Orot*, 2, 121.

Indeed, Kook believed that God intended to demonstrate to the world the uniqueness of the Jewish people through this war.⁹⁴ He stated that while Christians and Muslims walked in darkness, the Jews were being drawn towards the light of the Messiah by fulfilling the Torah. Kook further claimed that the son of Joseph Messiah had already come, completing his mission by bringing the Jews back to Jerusalem.⁹⁵ He associated this figure with Theodor Herzl.⁹⁶ Kook posited that the state intended to be established at the end of the war would represent the Messianic Kingdom of Israel, followed closely by the arrival of the son of David Messiah. He believed that the Jews needed to make significant political and military moves to thrive because only by doing so could they prove they were the Messiah generation and achieve "tikkun olam," allowing them to return to history and ultimately bring forth the son of David Messiah, a crucial element of their historical narrative.

Rabbi Kook, his analyses heavily rooted in Kabbalah, have been characterized as the starting point of Messianic Zionism, which is viewed as radical and revolutionary.⁹⁷ Following Kook, nearly every representative of Religious Zionism has adopted or been inspired by Kookist theology, interpreting contemporary developments through a prophetic lens within the context of the end times. Many have even strived to accelerate the coming of the end. Given Kook's predictions and desires, it is reasonable to say that war and bloodshed were incorporated into the effort to hasten this process. Even though the son of David Messiah did not appear after World War I, Messianic Zionism continued to interpret new developments as signs of the Messiah's arrival and as prophecies.⁹⁸ Significant events that were viewed as major signs following the First World War include the Holocaust, World War II, the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, and the occupation of Jerusalem by Israel in 1967.

Messianic Zionists have regarded 1945 as the year in which they hit rock bottom, drawing upon the Kabbalistic teachings of descent and ascent. For these rabbis, the Holocaust is interpreted as a profound sign, marking not only their lowest point but also the beginning of a process of atonement that allows them to rise again. Within this framework, the Holocaust is seen as the first stage of ultimate redemption and an indication that the coming of the Messiah is imminent.⁹⁹ In parallel, devout and mystical Zionists view World War II as a similarly hopeful event—indeed, a necessary one—arguing from a mystical perspective that such bloodshed was essential for the Jewish people to hit rock bottom before they could ascend. While some Zionist rabbis do not believe there is a direct relationship between the Holocaust and ultimate redemption, many key figures within Religious Zionism interpret this event as a prophecy, leading to a general impression among some religious Zionists that the Holocaust is intrinsically linked to their fate. It is certain that those with this impression are the religious Zionists in Palestine, and that the Jews who perished in the death camps did not share the same thoughts as them.

The most radical interpretations regarding the Holocaust come from Y. Kook. According to him, the Jews who did not return to Palestine through the door opened by

⁹⁴ Schwartz, *Religious Zionism History and Ideology*, 35.

⁹⁵ Kook, *Orot*, 141-142.

⁹⁶ Novak, *Zionism and Judaism: A New Theory*, 236.

⁹⁷ Rabkin, "Religious Roots of a Political Ideology", 86.

⁹⁸ Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, 85.

⁹⁹ Schwartz, *Religious Zionism History and Ideology*, 77.

Zionism made a mistake. They paid the price for this mistake in gas chambers and camps. Because they did not return, God's plan was fulfilled, and the Jews died. God wants to return all Jews to Jerusalem, and the Holocaust is a sign sent by God to uproot the exile and is one of the most important stages of ultimate redemption.¹⁰⁰ Kook answers the question of why God signaled to the Jews not with a positive event but with a catastrophe by stating that God's reasoning cannot be understood by humans.¹⁰¹ However, as he understands it, this destruction and death were necessary so that the Jews (referring to the Jews who migrated to Palestine) could regain their ancient character. According to Kook, the Holocaust reminded the Jews of their need to fight and helped them discover their heroism and physical and national characteristics.¹⁰² Analyzing Kook's interpretations reveals that he viewed the Jews who died in the camps as sacrifices for the Jews living in Palestine and believed that Jewish blood was part of the atonement.

Messianic Zionists, who regard the Holocaust and the world wars as part of ultimate redemption, consider the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 as evidence of how right they were in their beliefs. According to them, the war and the death of 6 million Jews were divine operations that completed the atonement and enabled the establishment of the State of Israel.¹⁰³ Consequently, in 1948, religious Zionists experienced great excitement with the belief and hope that the Messiah's arrival was very near. It should be noted that this excitement was somewhat greater than before. Religious Zionists, who analyzed Zionism and the State of Israel as a sacred means, believed that the promises and prophecies were now truly coming to fruition.¹⁰⁴ In the mindset of religious Zionists, a Jewish state is necessary for the Gog and Magog war to occur, meaning Gog must ally with other kings to attack the Jews. As is known, just one day after the establishment of the State of Israel, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Egypt, and Lebanon declared war on Israel. This concrete war was considered the first of the three major signs of the Messiah's arrival in the prophetic realm, namely the Gog and Magog war. The second major sign, the Messiah son of Joseph, has long been associated with Zionism, but after 1948, it became identified with the State of Israel. Messianic Zionists, drawing calculations and inferences from Kabbalah, claimed that the Messiah son of Joseph is militaristic and, therefore, that the State of Israel must act aggressively. From another perspective, if the Messiah son of Joseph (i.e., Israel) does not act aggressively, then the Messiah son of David cannot come.

The state has been established, and "kings" have attacked Israel, yet the Messiah still has not come. While religious Zionists experience great disappointment, Messianic Zionist religious leaders attribute the reason for the Messiah's absence to the secularism of society, the secular side of Zionism, as well as the failure to completely conquer all of Palestine, including Jerusalem. These rabbis claim that the Messiah's arrival has been delayed due to the Jewish community's continuous steps forward and backward, attributing it to their own shortcomings and sins. This perspective has further radicalized religious Zionists. For the Messiah to come, all Jews must migrate to Palestine, Jerusalem must be captured, and the territorial integrity of the Promised Land must be ensured, especially by cleansing Jerusalem

¹⁰⁰ Inbari, *Messianic Religious Zionism*, 24.

¹⁰¹ Inbari, *Messianic Religious Zionism*, 29.

¹⁰² Schwartz, *Religious Zionism History and Ideology*, 78.

¹⁰³ Inbari, *Messianic Religious Zionism*, 25.

¹⁰⁴ Masalha, *The Bible and Zionism*, 138

of Muslims and Christians, rebuilding the temple, and making the Jewish community more religious.¹⁰⁵ It is important to emphasize that among the different interpretations regarding the borders of the Promised Land, Messianic Zionists accept the largest map, which extends to the Central Anatolia region of Turkey.¹⁰⁶

By 1967, a significant development occurred that greatly excited Messianic Zionists. As a result of the Six-Day War, the State of Israel occupied Jerusalem and expanded its territory from the south to the north and east. Thus, Messianic Zionists were somewhat satisfied once again.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, the expansion of Israel's territory through wars has always been an inspiring indicator for Messianic Zionists and a sign of self-validation.¹⁰⁸ For figures like Y. Kook, Israel fought against demonic forces in the 1967 war and its victory proved that the Messiah's arrival was approaching. In their view, as Jerusalem was freed from impurity and filth, the Jews crossed a threshold where they would declare their absolute sovereignty. However, even after Jerusalem was occupied, the Messiah son of David still did not arrive. This is because not all Jews migrated to Palestine, society did not become more religious, the temple was not built, and those in the Knesset continued to be as filthy as pigs.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, Muslims and Christians were not expelled from Jerusalem.

As a result, the Messianic Zionist perspective on time is very "apocalyptic," aimed at accelerating the end, reading signs, Kabbalistic, militaristic, and bloodthirsty. According to their belief, the emergence of wars, the expansion of Israel's territory, the shedding of blood in this process, and the killing of today's Amalekites and Hamans are essential. More specifically, today's Palestinians are seen as Amalek, and Iranians as Haman, therefore they must be killed. Thus, contrary to Jewish tradition, for Messianic Zionists, the commands to kill given to Moses and Joshua are not relegated to the past; they are current commands. In their view, the killing of Muslims does not fall into the category of murder.¹¹⁰ This form of radicalism, which began with Rabbi Kook's production of Messianic Zionism, poses a significant threat, especially to Muslims and Christians living in the entirety of the promised land, thus in the Middle East. The destructive effects of this radicalism have been experienced greatly, especially after 1948 and particularly after 1967. It is also known that Kookist theology and similar forms of radicalism have been embraced by a greater number of religious Zionists since 1973, thus increasing the population and influence of Messianic Zionism.¹¹¹ This also means that the number of those who view the State of Israel as a Messianic state has significantly increased. Furthermore, Messianic Zionists are pressuring their state to carry out more occupations, commit more murders, and initiate wars. Finally, according to this form of radicalism, anti-Zionist Jews are also in an unforgivable sin because they have waged war against the Messianic state by collaborating with the satanic side.

¹⁰⁵ Inbari, *Messianic Religious Zionism*, 21-22, 32.

¹⁰⁶ Masalha, *The Bible and Zionism*, 159-162.

¹⁰⁷ Masalha, *The Bible and Zionism*, 138.

¹⁰⁸ Masalha, *The Bible and Zionism*, 136.

¹⁰⁹ Inbari, *Messianic Religious Zionism*, 32.

¹¹⁰ Masalha, *The Bible and Zionism*, 158-159.

¹¹¹ Inbari, *Messianic Religious Zionism*, 30.

Conclusion

The perception of time as limited and linear in Jewish theology is closely tied to the belief in the Messiah. This belief suggests a situation from which Jews seek redemption, with both concrete and abstract aspects. The concrete aspect includes the end of exile, return to Jerusalem, and earthly salvation. The abstract aspect involves God's "turning away" and "silence" from the Jews, which forms the religious foundation of redemption. The Messiah's coming will prove God's renewed communication with the Jews. The Messiah's arrival, linked with the end times, has shaped the Jewish understanding of time, history, and the calendar. The Hebrew calendar, constructed with the understanding of limited and linear time in Jewish theology, sheds light on both the past and the future. The Kingdom of David is seen as the golden age, serving as a memory of the past, while the belief in the Messiah offers hope for the future. So, the doctrine of the Messiah is a realm where memory and hope converge, which is a primary reason for directing the Jews toward the timeline and history. According to religious scholars, this golden age will repeat. The reason for this interpretation lies in the fact that Jews, tracing their beginnings to Abraham, also incorporate the time before him into the Hebrew calendar, thereby claiming a period that the Jews did not inhabit. This attitude is, in fact, a product of the belief that even when they did not exist, the center of the world was constituted by the Jews. Similarly, it can be said that rabbis see time, the world, and even God as under their monopoly, just as the narrative of creation in the Torah begins.

The last 2000-year period of the Hebrew calendar is known as the Messianic Age, the time frame in which the Jews awaited redemption. This period is marked by the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE (3829 in the Hebrew calendar) or, according to another view, the expulsion of the Jews from Jerusalem in 3894. Jews have lived in what they refer to as the end times, believing that as the years pass, the Messiah's arrival nears. By the 1950s, during a challenging period of diaspora, the first seeds of Zionism began to emerge, promising salvation by sharing in the Messiah's role. Zionism sought to end the exile, return Jews to Jerusalem, establish a sovereign state, and re-enter history with power. Religious Zionist rabbis interpreted this as a religious revival, while secular Zionism addressed both political and theological aspects. Zionism gained support from both religious and secular Jews, with secular Zionism focusing on earthly salvation and religious Zionism on spiritual salvation. Secular Zionists embraced an infinite, linear view of time, focusing on worldly power, while religious Zionists, with a limited view of time, believed in resurrection and a kingdom ruled by the Messiah. Despite their differing perceptions of time, both secular and religious Zionists share ambitions for domination and influence, much like the Sadducees and Pharisees of the Second Temple period, who were deeply attached to worldly ambitions and lacked a belief in the afterlife.

The common ground between Zionist rabbis and secular Zionists is the construction of a bright future for the Jews. Zionism believes that achieving this future requires gaining power in many areas, from politics to economics, and if necessary, warfare. Religious Zionism, especially Messianic Zionism, shares this belief. The key term is "war," where the Messiah, end times, prophecies, and signs are all connected. Although most secular Zionists may not believe in the Messiah, they have utilized this doctrine, claiming the Messiah can be represented by a tank or bomb, asserting that Zionism is the light of the Messiah. In contrast, religious Zionism views everything through the lens of the Messiah, time, and prophecy,

doing everything to hasten the end times. Their interpretations of past signs and actions reveal their expectations for the future.

When the first pioneers of Zionism emerged in 1825, religious Zionist leaders believed a 400-year golden age with the Messiah, with 415 years left until the apocalypse. They posited that when the Jews returned to Jerusalem and established a state, three major signs heralding the arrival of the Messiah would occur. Moreover, it was believed that Gog could not attack the Jews before this state was formed. The emergence of Herzl in the 1890s was interpreted as the arrival of the Messiah, the son of Joseph. As Zionism achieved its goals, rabbis interpreted events like the World Wars and the Holocaust as signs of the Messiah's coming. The establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, coinciding with the Hebrew calendar year 5708, brought ecstatic joy to Kabbalism. This date, also the year of Abraham's birth, served as a pivotal reference point in their calculations, indicating 312 years until the apocalypse.

This remaining time suggests that the period with the Messiah is not 400 years, but a 60-70 year timeframe, with an additional 75-year wait based on Abraham's journey to Canaan at 75. This implies the world's lifespan is 5850 years, not 6000, leaving 142 years until the apocalypse from 1948. Following 1948, several significant events occurred: In 1956, Sara was born, and a war broke out between the State of Israel and Egypt. In 1973, Sara married Abraham, coinciding with the Yom Kippur War. In 1991/92, the Tower of Babel was built, coinciding with the First Gulf War. In 2000, Abraham destroyed idols and was thrown into the fire, corresponding to the beginning of Second Intifada. In 2003, Abraham left Ur of the Chaldeans, coinciding with the Second Gulf War. In 2020, Abraham received the first revelation, and the Abraham Accords were established. In 2023, Abraham left Haran for Canaan, and on October 7, 2023, genocide began in Gaza. The violence in Gaza is significant because it symbolizes Hagar in mystical terms, with radical Zionists believing they must "cast out the handmaiden." These radicals selectively use mystical calculations and sometimes alter the Torah's chronology to fit their agenda.

All these calculations, mystical deductions, and the urgency of Messianic Zionists to hasten the end are within the same framework. Messianic Zionists do not desire the true apocalypse but a golden age in this world. In pursuing this, they are attempting to create an artificial apocalypse for others in the Middle East, as the arrival of the Messiah necessitates war and destruction. Therefore, their goal is not the apocalypse itself, but the construction of a bright future for themselves, while for others, it signifies death, and destruction. This entire belief system illustrates how Zionism, while trying to establish a bright future for the Jews, disregards and violates the past, present, and future of others, even dimming their light. Finally, considering that immigration, statehood, sovereignty, and return to history have already occurred through Zionism, it becomes apparent that even if the Messiah were to come, there would be little left for him to do.

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§



The Contradictory Legacy of Zionism: Radical Religious Groups

► Araştırma makalesi / Research article

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Abstract

Zionism initially emerged as a secular movement aimed at the national liberation of the Jewish people. Most Zionist leaders, known as the founding fathers, sought to dissociate Judaism from its religious identity and embed it within a modern nationalist framework. The desire to establish a national consciousness while sidelining religious teachings led to significant conflicts and schisms among both secular and religious Jewish communities. Aside from a small minority within religious groups, Zionism was largely rejected and scorned by religious Jews in its early days. However, the establishment of the state, particularly following the Six-Day War in 1967, paradoxically provided fertile ground for the rise of religious radicalism. Religious groups began interpreting the acquisition of sacred lands, such as Jerusalem and the West Bank, as a divine sign, advocating for Israel's expansion as a religious mission. This study will examine the contradictory legacy of Zionism, characterized by its secular, and at times anti-religious, ideology. Zionism continues to create deep divisions within Israeli society, perpetuating a persistent tension between secular and religious identities. Radical Zionist religious groups legitimize violence against Palestinians, sustaining a profound area of conflict in Israeli politics and settlement policies.

Keywords: Religious Zionism, Radicalism, Israel, Judaism.

Siyonizm'in Çelişkili Mirası: Radikal Dini Gruplar

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Öz

Başlangıçta Siyonizm, Yahudi halkının ulusal kurtuluşunu amaçlayan seküler bir hareket olarak şekillenmiştir. Kurucu babalar olarak nitelendirilen çoğu Siyonist lider, Yahudiliği dini kimliğinden arındırarak modern ve milliyetçi bir bağlama oturtmaya çalışmıştır. Dini öğretileri geri planda bırakarak ulusal bir bilinç oluşturma arzusu hem seküler hem de dindar Yahudi toplulukları arasında derin çatışmalara ve akabinde bölünmelere neden olmuştur. Dini gruplar içerisinde azınlık denilebilecek kadar küçük bir topluluk dışında Siyonizm, ilk zamanlarda dindar Yahudiler tarafından desteklenmemiş bilakis hakir görülerek reddedilmiştir. Ancak devletin kurulması ve özellikle de 1967 Savaşı sonrası Siyonizm'in seküler temelleri, zamanla ironik bir biçimde dini radikalizmin yükselmesine de zemin hazırlamıştır. Kudüs ve Batı Şeria gibi kutsal toprakların ele geçirilmesini ilahi bir işaret olarak yorumlayan dindar gruplar, İsrail'in dini bir misyonla genişlemesi gerektiğini savunmaya başlamıştır. Bu süreçte irili ufaklı birçok radikal dini grup türemiş ve yabancı karşıtlığı zirve yapmıştır. Bu çalışmada da seküler hatta din karşıtı bir ideoloji olan Siyonizm'in bıraktığı çelişkili miras işlenmeye çalışacaktır. Zira Siyonizm İsrail toplumunda derin ayrılıklara yol açarak, devletin seküler ve dini kimlikleri arasında sürekli bir gerilim yaratmaya devam etmektedir. Radikal Siyonist dini gruplar, hem Filistinlilere karşı şiddet eylemlerini meşurlaştırma devam etmektedirler. Bu durum, İsrail siyasetinde ve Filistin topraklarındaki yerleşim politikalarında derin bir çatışma alanı olarak varlığını sürdürmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dini Siyonizm, Radikalizm, İsrail, Yahudilik.

Introduction

Zionism did not initially emerge from a deep religious attachment to the Holy Land or the spiritual significance of these territories. Rather, it developed as a reaction to the exclusion and discrimination experienced by Jews due to the rise of nationalist movements in Christian Europe. Zionism, framed as the only viable response to anti-Semitism, was perceived by its founders as the ultimate means of liberation for Jews from the confinements of the ghettos. During the early stages of Zionist thought, reactions to these ideas were far from homogeneous. Over time, various forms of Zionism have emerged. From its very inception, it is inaccurate to speak of a unified Zionist ideology. Broadly speaking, Zionism encompasses multiple strands, each characterized by fundamentally distinct ideological frameworks.

Initially, Political Zionism was predominantly driven by secular groups, largely composed of elites, who interpreted Judaism through a racial lens. These groups believed that without significant changes to traditional Jewish life, achieving equal treatment comparable to their fellow citizens in their respective countries would be impossible. Consequently, they embraced Zionism as the sole path to national salvation. The primary goal of Political Zionism was to establish a Jewish state in Palestine as a definitive solution to the existing Jewish question. Motivated by aspirations for global recognition and acceptance by the upper echelons of society, this movement favored diplomacy as a means of achieving its objectives, albeit with an underlying colonial perspective. However, during the early years when Political Zionist ideology gained prominence, devout religious Jews, who had long adhered to the tradition of exile, dismissed Zionism as a secular form of nationalism. They argued that true salvation could only be achieved through divine will. In response to the perceived threat of assimilation, these religious groups sought to fortify their existing beliefs and traditions as a means of resistance.

On the other hand, Revisionist Zionism, which geographically emerged in Eastern Europe and predominantly among Russian Jews, adopted a highly radical stance. The primary goal of this movement was to establish a Jewish state encompassing both banks of the Jordan River. Unlike Political Zionists, who sought collaboration with the world, Revisionists believed that the solution lay not in compromise but in warfare and armed resistance. Another type of Zionism that also arose in the same geographical region was Labor or Socialist Zionism, which advocated for the establishment of a socialist state in Palestine. Labor Zionists, fueled by a profound dissatisfaction with the weak image of Jews in the diaspora, aimed to leave this perception behind and create a strong, new Hebrew identity for Jews arriving during the early aliyahs. Emphasizing collective living and working principles, this movement was supported by structures such as moshavim and kibbutzim. These structures played a crucial role during the founding phase of the State of Israel, although they gradually lost their influence due to evolving economic and social conditions. Another distinct form of Zionism embraced a fundamentally different ideology, emphasizing the necessity of cultural transformation in society. This movement, known as Cultural or Spiritual Zionism, was shaped under the leadership of prominent thinkers such as Ahad Ha'am, Peretz Smolenskin, and Moses Hess. It centered on the revival of Jewish civilization, with the theme of "rebirth" at its core. The movement aimed to reconstruct

Jewish culture, language, and values, thereby laying the foundation for a renewed cultural identity.

Finally, among the various strands of Zionist movements, Religious Zionism occupies a significant position. This approach advocated for the establishment of a connection between Judaism and Zionism, presenting a framework that integrated both religious and national identities. Initially supported by only a small minority, this ideology was developed by the early representatives of modern Religious Zionism and, over time, gained broader acceptance with the belief that the Holy Land would once again become the center of Jewish life. Religious Zionism, as a movement aimed at fulfilling God's sacred promises, added a spiritual dimension to Zionist ideology. This perspective posited that Jews could be restructured and brought together in the Holy Land in accordance with divine will. Despite its fundamental differences with secular Zionist movements, it initially argued for the possibility of uniting around common goals. However, over time, these two opposing ideologies began to pursue divergent objectives, rendering their conflicts inevitable. As can be inferred, even before any concrete decisions were made, Zionism, rather than acting as a unifying force, caused shifts in traditional Jewish identity, leading to internal fragmentation within Judaism.

Like other nationalist movements, Zionism also drew upon religious, historical, and traditional sources to construct its theses. For centuries, Jews who spoke different languages and lived in diverse cultures and rituals across various geographies found a shared memory to be an indispensable resource for forging an ethnic and national identity with a stronger emphasis. Starting in the 1800s, waves of migration brought Jewish groups to the region, each with varying motivations and aspirations for their way of life. Political Zionists, recognizing that merely moving to the land in question would not suffice, prioritized the goal of creating a new Hebrew identity. In this context, the construction of a new generation coincided with the process of state-building. This prototype individual was envisioned as someone who spoke modern Hebrew, abandoned the traditional and passive image of Jews, and embodied a personality integrated with the world—strong, courageous, and determined. Religion, in this paradigm, was regarded more as a tradition; the Hebrew Bible was seen as a book of history and ancestry, respected but not actively engaged with. From the earliest migration waves, the shaping of this new generation became observable. However, Zionism's call for migration and transformation attracted only a limited segment of the global Jewish population to the region during this period. The minority status of Jews in the region compelled Zionist leaders to collaborate with incoming Jewish groups regardless of their identities or origins.

Driven by the intensifying force of anti-Semitism, migrations brought together a wide variety of Jewish groups—religious, secular, Western, and Eastern—into the region. Among these groups were devoutly religious Jews, primarily motivated by theological convictions. Despite their views being fundamentally opposed to those of Political Zionists, these differences largely went unnoticed during the early years. An atmosphere of silence prevailed, driven by factors such as ongoing wars, the collective effort to build a state, and the symbolic significance of returning to Zion after centuries of dispersion. However, this silence was both short-lived and superficial. Following the declaration of the State of Israel's independence in 1948, tensions surrounding the visibility of religion in state policies began to emerge. Certain religious Jewish groups actively sought to impose their own religious laws and practices

through various means, resulting in escalating internal conflicts. The true turning point, however, came after the Six-Day War, which many religious Jews interpreted as a manifestation of divine favor or a direct message from God. With the capture of holy sites, religious Jewish groups—empowered by newfound confidence—began advocating for a socio-political order grounded in ethno-religious exclusivity and strict adherence to *halakhaic* laws. This shift not only deepened the polarization between religious and secular Jews but also redefined the socio-political discourse within Israel. During this period, extremist religious Zionist factions and individuals emerged, frequently targeting secular Jews and non-Jews alike. These revanchist groups legitimized their actions through religious rhetoric, framing them as part of a "holy war." This revanchist mindset continues to persist, with religious narratives being instrumentalized to justify their actions. These radical actions continue to extend their influence across various spheres of Israeli society, ranging from politics to social life, maintaining their significance to this day.

1. From Messianism to Nationalism: The Evolution of Religious Zionism

The call for a return to the Promised Land, as articulated by Zionism, was initially perceived as an act of defiance by many rabbis, as it implied a breach of the tradition of exile and covenant. In traditional Orthodox Jewish belief, adherence to these two principles would eventually lead to the coming of the Messiah and the realization of the return to Zion. Conversely, the foundational myth of Zionism proposed a three-stage plan, with the initial step being the abrogation of exile (Heb. *sheilat ha-galut*). This would subsequently facilitate a return to the Land of Israel (Heb. *ha-shiva le-Eretz Yisrael*) and a reintegration into history (Heb. *ha-shiva la historia*).¹ In fact, the abrogation of exile, or the return to the Promised Land, has been a persistent theme in Jewish thought across centuries. However, the longing for these lands has always been accompanied by a remembrance of an idealized past. Nevertheless, the reattainment of this ideal past and the return to those lands can only occur through the will of God, and it is the Messiah who is expected to fulfill this future.² In this context, Zionism sought to diminish the vitality of the expectation of a divine return and the hope for the Messiah's arrival. While Zionist pioneers viewed the diaspora as a form of punishment and a state to be overcome, most Jews of that time did not interpret the diaspora as a curse. On the contrary, it was seen as a final stage of judgment and purification.³

¹ Gabriel Piterberg, *Siyonizmin Dönüşleri: Mütler, Siyaset ve İsrail'de Araştırmacılık* (Istanbul: İthaki, 2015), 20.

² Esther Benbassa, Jean-Christophe Attias, *Paylaşılmalı Kutsal Topraklar ve İsrail* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2012), 163.

³ See Ezekiel, 20:34-38: "And I will bring you out from the people and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched-out arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face. Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord God. And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am the Lord." 41-44: "I will accept you as fragrant incense when I bring you out from the nations and gather you from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will be proved holy through you in the sight of the nations. Then you will know that I am the Lord, when I bring you into the land of Israel, the land I had sworn with uplifted hand to give to your ancestors. There you will remember your conduct and all the actions by which you have defiled yourselves, and you will loathe yourselves for all the evil you have done. You will know that I am the Lord, when

Additionally, the Jewish scholar Rashi regarded the diaspora as a blessing, arguing that it prevented the simultaneous annihilation of Jewish communities living in different regions.⁴ He emphasized that the strong position of the Torah in Jewish memory was due to its role as a unifying force during the diaspora, and he urged that these periods should always be remembered positively.⁵

Throughout history, the Jewish people have interpreted all misfortunes and rewards they encountered as reflections of divine will. In this context, the decree of exile was seen as a divine command, a punishment for disobedience to God's laws, and was thus accepted throughout the period of the diaspora. Consequently, the return to Zion was viewed as possible not through human will but solely through the power of God, with the concept of the "Promised Land" retaining its meaning as both a spiritual direction and an abstract national identity. In the Hebrew Bible, the phrase "*I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or the does of the field, that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases*" (Song of Songs 2:7, 3:5, 8:4) is repeated three times and has been a frequently cited source in rabbinic discussions on exile. This expression is also mentioned in the Babylonian Talmud, where Rabbi Yossi interpreted it as representing three oaths that God took from Israel. The first of these oaths was that the Jewish people should not collectively migrate to Eretz Yisrael. The second was that the Israelites should not rebel against the nations under whose rule they lived. The third oath was a divine promise that other nations would not oppress Israel excessively.

Various rabbinic interpretations can be found concerning the three oaths. One of the early Tosafists, Ra'aven (1090-1170), warned that Jews who attempted to migrate to Palestine could be subject to the death penalty based on these oaths.⁶ The Kabbalist Rabbi Ezra of Girona (1160-1238) also asserted that those who chose to migrate would be seen as having abandoned God.⁷ Talmud commentator Jonathan Eybeschütz (1690-1764) prohibited collective migration to the Holy Land, even if permitted by all nations, unless the Messiah had arrived. Similarly, Moses Mendelssohn, known for his reformist endeavors, emphasized the importance of adhering to the three oaths. Indeed, during the diaspora, migration to Palestine occurred solely for religious purposes and on an individual basis; such migrations were not intended to hasten the coming of the Messiah or to be seen as a form of conquest. One of the most prominent figures who advocated for migration to Palestine was Nachmanides. He interpreted the verse from the Book of Numbers, "You shall take possession of the land and settle in it, for I have given it to you to possess," as implying that one of the 613 commandments (*mitzvot*) is to go to Eretz Yisrael and live there.

I deal with you for my name's sake and not according to your evil ways and your corrupt practices, you people of Israel, declares the Sovereign Lord."

⁴ Tamar Amar-Dahl, *Zionist Israel and the Question of Palestine: Jewish Statehood and the History of the Middle East Conflict* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2017), 5.

⁵ Eric Lawee, *Rashi's Commentary on the Torah: Canonization and Resistance in the Reception of a Jewish Classic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 41.

⁶ Israel Shahak, Norton Mevzinsky, *İsrail'de Yahudi Fundamentalizmi* (İstanbul: Düşün Yayıncılık, 2015), 58.

⁷ Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 219.

Consequently, he is regarded as a spiritual leader of religious Zionism that emerged centuries later, and his teachings have often been cited as references.⁸

The foundations of Religious Zionism were laid in the 19th century through the synthesis of secular, political Zionism with Jewish religious tradition. Political Zionists reinterpreted Jewish history from a national perspective, utilizing the Tanakh as a historical source. They aimed to present traditional Jewish rituals within a national framework while positioning Halakha as a unifying force for the Jewish community and as a basis for legitimizing their actions. In contrast, Religious Zionists reevaluated fundamental Jewish concepts, such as exile, covenant, the holy land, and the Messiah, which had remained unchanged for centuries, imparting these concepts with new meanings. By reinterpreting notions of chosenness and exile, they sought to transform Jewish passive resistance into an active struggle. Within this context, Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer (1795–1874), considered one of the pioneers of Religious Zionism, holds particular significance. Kalischer viewed the Jewish emancipation process as the beginning of a new era orchestrated by God and argued for the necessity of adapting to this new phase. Kalischer emphasized the importance of fostering relations with Gentiles, suggesting that in the past, God had used the hostility of Gentiles as a means to punish the Jewish people. He posited that redemption might similarly come indirectly through the Gentiles. Furthermore, he considered migration to Palestine and settling there as essential steps toward awaiting the time of salvation.⁹

Another prominent proto-Zionist, Rabbi Yehuda Alkalai (1798-1878), delivered written sermons emphasizing the imminence of redemption and the necessity for Jews to migrate to the Land of Israel.¹⁰ He also advocated for Jewish organizations on international platforms to enable self-representation and defense, founding the “Association for the Settlement of the Land of Israel” with this objective. On matters such as migration to Palestine, these two Religious Zionist rabbis initially appeared aligned with political Zionists, though, for them, political organization represented a later stage. Rooted in messianic tradition, these rabbis acknowledged the inevitability of the emancipation process and underscored the importance of national unity to guard against the risk of identity loss among Jews in this transformative period.

2. The Violation of the Three Oaths

One of the most influential figures in Religious Zionism, Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (1865-1935), rather than bringing new interpretations to the Three Oaths, developed an original perspective by arguing that these oaths had been misinterpreted for centuries. Kook adapted *halakha* to align with the secular ideology of Zionism, thus introducing an innovative perspective to Orthodox Judaism. Embracing a messianic approach, Kook viewed redemption as a gradual process and interpreted the negative events of his time¹¹ as “links in

⁸ Eric Holzer, “The Use of Military Force in the Religious Zionist Ideology of Rabbi Yitzchak Ya’akov Reines and his Successors”, *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* 18 (2002), 74-94.

⁹ Bernard Susser, Charles S. Liebman, *Choosing Survival: Strategies for a Jewish Future* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 33.

¹⁰ See Abraham Isaac Kook, *Mashmia Shalom* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, n.d.).

¹¹ Kook, who argued that the end of earthly life was near, associated the losses of World War I with the coming of Judgment Day. In an essay written during the war, he expressed his thoughts as follows: “The war is a planned period of purification. This purification will affect the whole world, including the holy land. The war will bring

the chain of redemption” (*athalta digeulah* in Hebrew).¹² In essence, Kook believed that the people of Israel were created to serve God and were dependent on a pure bond of love with Him. He argued that the closer one is to material wealth and prosperity, the more one’s connection to the truth weakens. God kept the Jewish people distanced from worldly concerns for many years to allow them to realize their inner spiritual strength. Through exile, the Jewish people fulfilled their mission as the chosen people by spreading monotheism wherever they went.¹³ However, with the rise of modernity and increasing antisemitism, Kook argued that exile would not end by God’s hand; rather, the Jewish people needed both physical and spiritual revival. Detached from their sacred land and striving to maintain their identity, the Jews had become spiritually weakened and were experiencing a gradual spiritual decline. Kook described exile as a heavy burden upon the shoulders of the Jewish people and asserted that their motivation to bear this burden stemmed from their historical and spiritual ties, as well as from their sense of chosenness¹⁴; otherwise, a secular Jewish state would emerge.¹⁵ According to Kook and the religious Zionist rabbis of his time, neither secular nor religious views or actions alone could be fully effective. Reaching the ultimate goal would require a synthesis of these opposing views. Zionism, which brings together both religious and secular approaches, is thus seen as a crucial milestone in the journey toward redemption.¹⁶

3. The Religious Significance of the 1967 War

Entering the 1948 War of Independence without fully confronting the trauma of the Holocaust pushed both conditions and emotions in Israel to the extremes. During the state’s early years, crises were often addressed by political leaders invoking past tragedies to mobilize the public. According to political scientist Asher Arian, Israel during this period developed a “security religion” — a mindset shaped by nationalist and religious symbols.¹⁷ Until 1967, Israel maintained a relatively cautious foreign policy, though a deep-seated mistrust toward non-Jews persisted within Jewish society. The 1967 Six-Day War dramatically altered Israel’s territorial status and international image. By defeating the armies of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, Israel expanded its borders to control the Sinai Peninsula, Gaza, the West Bank, and the Golan Heights, stretching from the Suez Canal to the northern Golan. Within Israeli society, this victory was seen by many as a “Divine Triumph” and a national rebirth. Defense Minister Moshe Dayan even drew a parallel between the six days of the war and the six days

the Jewish nation to prominence and enable people to understand God more fully.” See Kaplan, Lawrence J. Kaplan, David Shatz, Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook and Jewish Spirituality. (New York: New York University Press, 1995)

¹² Judith Winther, “Rabbi Avraham Yizhak HaCohen Kook: Between Exile and Messianic Redemption”, *Nordisk judaistik/Scandinavian Jewish Studies* 9/2 (1988), 69-81.

¹³ Chanan Morrison, *Gold from the Land of Israel: A New Light on the Weekly Torah Portion from the Writings of Rabbi Abraham Isaac HaKohen Kook* (Jerusalem: Urim Publications, 2006), 88-89.

¹⁴ George Robinson, *Essential Judaism: Updated Edition: A Complete Guide to Beliefs, Customs & Rituals* (New York: Atria Paperback, 2016), 486.

¹⁵ Abraham Isaac H. Kook, *Orot*, trans. B. Naor (New York: Tobi Press, 2015), 122-123.

¹⁶ Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, 86-88.

¹⁷ Asher Arian, *Security Threatened Surveying Israeli Opinion on Peace and War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 164.

of creation in Genesis, reinforcing Israel's legitimacy.¹⁸ At this time, many previously skeptical of Israel's existence, including segments of the Jewish population, found that questions of Israel's legitimacy largely dissipated. Following the war, aliyah to Israel surged, and Zionists, religious Jews, and secular groups alike viewed these developments positively, deepening their confidence in the state. The acquisition of sacred areas in Judea and Samaria further ignited an apocalyptic fervor within the population.¹⁹

In the aftermath of the war, the "enlightened occupation" initiative was launched from Jerusalem to Gaza, aimed at rendering these areas suitable for Jewish settlement through the evacuation of the local population. New Jewish residential units were subsequently established in the vacated areas. During this period, religious community leaders organized various events to garner political support; for example, Rabbi Shlomo Goren blew the shofar at the Western Wall, invoking the belief in the coming of the Messiah. Similarly, Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook, who advocated for the preservation of the West Bank, Gaza, and Sinai, became a spiritual leader for settlers, spreading the message that "yielding even the smallest part of the holy land would be a grave sin." Kook worked alongside Yacoov Nissim, the Mizrahi Chief Rabbi of the time, to disseminate this message nationally. Rabbis active in political affairs argued that Judea, Samaria, and Azra held crucial importance for the arrival of the Messiah, emphasizing that settlements in these areas should be planned with utmost care; to this end, settlements like Qiryat Arba were renamed after figures from the Tanakh. Among Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook's students, Rabbi Moshe Levinger, Rabbi Haim Drukman, and Rabbi Shlomo Aviner laid the groundwork for the establishment of the Gush Emunim (Bloc of the Faithful) movement in 1974.

4. Radical Religious Groups in Israel

The 1948 Israeli Declaration of Independence committed the state to uphold equality, freedom, and rights for all citizens regardless of religion, language, race, or gender, alongside assurances to respect the holy sites of all faith communities. However, in the following years, Israel's founding socialist and secular values gradually shifted toward a more theopolitical and ethnocentric governance approach. This transformation accelerated with the 1977 election of the right-wing Likud Party, which marked a turning point as state administration began to take on an increasingly religious and ethnonationalist focus. The rising influence of religious parties in the political arena further blurred the lines between religion and state, fostering significant tensions between secular and religious groups in society.

Initially confined to secular and Zionist groups, the fundamentalist movement gained momentum following the 1967 War, particularly with the acquisition of sacred areas like East Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria. With increased support from religious communities and leaders, this movement expanded, culminating in the formation of religious Zionist movements such as Gush Emunim. These groups advocated fiercely for retaining "sacred lands at any cost" and backed an ideal of an expansive Jewish state. Radical leaders, including Rabbi Meir Kahane and religious Zionist leaders of Gush Emunim, stoked nationalistic-

¹⁸ Roger Louis, Avi Shlaim, *The 1967 Arab-Israeli War: Origins and Consequences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 22.

¹⁹ Ilan Pappé, *Modern Filistin Tarihi*, trans. N. Plümer (Ankara: Phoenix, 2007), 260.

messianic fervor within Israeli society, promoting settlement expansion and calls for the acquisition of additional territories.

As religious groups gained influence, the political and religious balance within the state shifted further, solidified by the Likud government's policies. Radical groups began targeting not only Arabs residing in Israel but also secular and moderate Jewish politicians, with notable incidents like the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin amid peace negotiations during the Oslo Accords. These radical ideologies have permeated educational and religious institutions, deeply impacting the youth and intensifying divisions within Israeli society. Today, these fundamentalist movements remain active, contributing to the spread of extremist and nationalist sentiments that continue to increase societal tensions in Israel.

4.1. Religious Extremism: Organizations and Leading Figures

When discussing Jewish radicalism outside of Israel, organizations such as Haganah, Irgun, Etzel, and Lehi—predominantly secular and Zionist—typically come to mind. These groups were founded by young nationalists who had emigrated from Eastern Europe, influenced by revolutionary ideals, and who viewed Judaism primarily as a racial identity, emphasizing secularism and nationalism in establishing a Jewish state. These groups saw Judaism more as a unifying force shaped by secular values rather than as a religious identity, and they garnered support from religious communities to advance a shared vision, particularly in the state-building phase. Following Israel's territorial gains in the 1967 War, messianic sentiments rose among the religious sectors, setting the stage for the emergence of fundamentalist movements, most notably the religious Zionist movement known as Gush Emunim. Gush Emunim advocated for expanding Israel's borders and preserving the "sacred lands" acquired, stressing that Jews should never relinquish these territories. During this period, some communities distributed maps that promoted the vision of a larger Jewish state, aiming to annex lands from neighboring countries such as Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan.

Following the 1973 War, radical religious communities that opposed peace initiatives gained significant social influence through movements like Gush Emunim, which mobilized a broad base in Israeli society. This era witnessed the rise of religious Zionist ideology, which transformed Israel's social fabric as these movements began to engage in political actions justified by religious tenets. Rabbi Meir Kahane's Kach movement, founded in the United States, was especially impactful, rallying youth around a radical ideology and reaching the Israeli Parliament with its influence. One of Kahane's followers, Baruch Goldstein, demonstrated the violent extremes of radicalism with the 1994 Hebron Massacre, highlighting the potential for religious extremism to manifest in violence. Similarly, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated by Yigal Amir, a radical religious university student, during the Oslo Peace Process, underscoring the political power and societal reach of radical factions in Israel. Amir's claim that religious motives justified Rabin's assassination emphasized that religious radicals posed a threat not only to Palestinians but also to secular Jewish citizens. Groups like Gush Emunim and Kach have left a profound impact on Israeli society across generations, using education and public spaces to spread fundamentalist narratives and guide new generations in a religiously radical direction. Today, these extremist and chauvinist ideologies hold a considerable place within Israeli society, posing serious threats to Israel's internal security and foreign policy. Detailed examples of actions by both

small and large radical groups can enhance understanding of how these movements have legitimized their narratives and influenced Israeli society.

4.1.1. Brit HaKanaim (Zealots Alliance)

Brit HaKanaim emerged as a radical group of religious opposition to secular values during Israel's independence process. Founded by prominent figures like Rabbi Shlomo Lorentz and Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu, the organization grew influential within orthodox communities, initiating a series of actions against the state's secular framework.²⁰ As part of their opposition, the group employed violent tactics such as arson and attacks on businesses operating on Shabbat and secular public events, while rejecting the secular education system imposed in new immigrant camps, thereby deepening social polarization. In the 1950s, attempts to set fires in cafes and theaters open on Shabbat, as well as property damage to non-kosher food and clothing stores, demonstrated Brit HaKanaim's direct intervention in secular public life. Additional radical responses included attacks on soccer players and arson attempts on buses operating on Saturdays.²¹

One of the group's most notorious actions was the "Bride Operation," an attempt to place smoke bombs in the Knesset. Such actions cultivated a negative public image of ultra-Orthodox Jews, prompting Orthodox communities to distance themselves even further from secular society. Consequently, David Ben Gurion's vision of blending secular and religious Jewish communities into a societal "melting pot" has not materialized, as sociological divides have only deepened between the two groups. Today, interactions between secular and religious communities in Israel remain limited, and societal divisions persist on a structural level.

4.1.2. Malchut Yisrael (Tzrifin)

Following its establishment, Malchut Yisrael became popularly known as "Tzrifin" due to the trial of its members at the Tzrifin military base. Operating in the 1950s, this underground organization was primarily composed of religious youth and orthodox members who had previously aligned with nationalist groups like Lehi and Etzel, forming a unique social network. Tzrifin's defining trait was its combination of nationalist but devout members who, using rapid communication, coordinated frequent and violent actions in a highly dynamic structure. In response to the 1952 anti-Semitic "Doctors' Plot"²² in Moscow, the group bombed the Soviet Embassy in Tel Aviv. Rejecting Israel's 1948 borders, Tzrifin advocated for the territorial claims outlined in the Torah and focused on external matters such as anti-Semitism and Israel's relations with neighboring countries.²³

²⁰ Ami Pedahzur, Arie Perliger, *Jewish Terrorism in Israel*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 33.

²¹ Jerusalem Post, "Analysis: The Jewish Department's Worst Nightmare", 22 April 2007 (Accessed on November 19, 2024), <https://www.jpost.com/israel/analysis-the-jewish-departments-worst-nightmare>

²² Doctors' Plot: During Stalin's era, this term refers to the trials where a group of highly skilled and predominantly Jewish doctors was accused of conspiring to assassinate Soviet leaders. The development of the trials, proceedings, and subsequent rulings were kept in the public eye by media coverage throughout the process.

²³ Pedahzur, Perliger, *Jewish Terrorism in Israel*, 31.

4.1.3. Guş Emunim

Following the partial defeat in the 1973 War, Gush Emunim was established in 1974, emerging as one of Israel's most influential non-parliamentary movements with profound religious and political significance. Driven by messianic and nationalist ideology, the movement, led by Rabbi Moshe Levinger, pursued the expansion of Jewish settlements, embedding itself deeply within Israeli political life. The foundations of Gush Emunim are rooted in Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook's early 20th-century vision of a "Greater Israel," which sought to unify secular and religious Zionists around a shared objective.²⁴ Viewing land through a cosmic lens, Gush Emunim aimed to reshape Israeli territories to reflect a distinct Jewish identity, systematically expanding settlement areas. Countering government interventions on unauthorized settlements through mass protests, the movement gained formal recognition, forming a "sacred alliance" with the right-wing coalition government in 1977.²⁵

Guş Emunim's secondary aim was to exclude non-Jews living within Israeli territory to create a homogeneous Jewish society. Rabbis within the movement, invoking extreme interpretations of Talmudic and Kabbalistic texts, argued that negotiations with non-Jews posed a danger to the Jewish people, condemning such dialogues as initiatives that could lead to disaster. These rabbis held firmly that Jewish identity was "unique" and "chosen," regarding any calls for "normalization" as a betrayal of the covenant.²⁶ Consequently, a harsh stance and individual intimidation tactics toward non-Jews became common among settlers, establishing a distinct behavioral model in the community's social vision.

4.1.4. The Jewish Underground Movement of Guş Emunim

Fueled by Guş Emunim's slogans such as, "Our rights to these lands come from the Book and God, not the state," and "The Arabs are today's Amalekites," the escalating wave of settler terrorism in the 1980s inspired the formation of a new underground organization known as "The Jewish Underground" in the West Bank. This network, structured through familial ties, carried out violent actions and maintained direct connections with Guş Emunim leaders. Following the arrest of underground members, Guş Emunim actively supported them by organizing campaigns advocating for their release and amnesty, openly demonstrating its backing.

The underground organization carried out several messianic-driven attack attempts against the Al-Aqsa Mosque on the Temple Mount between 1978 and 1982; however, these plans were frequently intercepted and thwarted by Israeli internal intelligence.²⁷ Another target was the Arab residents of sacred areas, with operatives attempting to harass them by carrying out minor attacks on transportation, schools, and various public institutions.²⁸ In 1983, the group orchestrated attacks on Hebron University, Sheikh El Rashad Mosque, and

²⁴ Ehud Sprinzak, "Fundamentalism, Terrorism, and Democracy: the Case of the Gush Emunim Underground", Hebrew University of Jerusalem. (Accessed on October 24, 2024), https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field_document/ACLURM018956.pdf

²⁵ Shahak, Mevzinsky, *İsrail'de Yabudi Fundamentalizmi*, 210-211.

²⁶ Shahak, Mevzinsky, *İsrail'de Yabudi Fundamentalizmi*, 144-145.

²⁷ Pedahzur, Perlinger, *Jewish Terrorism in Israel*, 48.

²⁸ Selin Çağlayan, *İsrail Sözlüğü Siyonistler, Muhalifler, Tarihçiler, Eylemciler, Yerleşimciler, İsraililer* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2004), 418.

Sheikh Ali al-Bakka Mosque in Hebron, resulting in casualties and injuries. In 1984, they attempted a coordinated bombing attack on Arab buses in East Jerusalem, but the plot was foiled by intelligence, leading to the dismantling of the organization. Prior to this arrest, the group had undertaken several similar attempts.²⁹

4.1.5. Keshet

Keshet was an ultra-Orthodox group organized in opposition to secular Jews in Israel, with roots tracing back to protests in the late 1960s against autopsy practices that violated religious prohibitions.³⁰ By the 1970s, the group had intensified its activities, issuing threats to autopsy doctors and targeting shops selling sexual materials, notably bombing an adult store in Tel Aviv. In the 1980s, Keshet gained further visibility by bombing kiosks selling secular newspapers and magazines in conservative areas such as Bnei Brak, and by drawing public attention with graffiti containing threats on the graves of Theodor Herzl and David Ben Gurion.³¹ Although its actions were relatively small-scale, Keshet contributed to the deepening rift between haredi and secular Jewish communities, thereby intensifying social polarization.

4.1.6. Sicarii

Sicarii, established in 1989 and named after an ancient Jewish group known for assassinations using daggers during the Roman period, became known for its actions and assassination attempts in Israel between 1989 and 1990.³² This group targeted left-leaning and secular Jewish politicians, academics, and media figures who supported the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Believing that attacks against Arabs failed to draw sufficient attention, Sicarii shifted focus to peace-supporting Jews within Israel, engaging in symbolic acts of intimidation such as arson, vehicle attacks, and placing explosives near the home of a Jewish surgeon who had performed a heart transplant on an Arab patient.³³ Other actions included uprooting trees in the Yad Vashem Museum's Garden, specifically in the section honoring Gentiles who risked their lives to save Jews. These radical activities ultimately mobilized Israeli internal security forces, leading to the 1990 arrest of Sicarii members by Shin Bet and the complete dismantling of the group.

4.1.7. Bat Ayin

Bat Ayin, strategically located within the Gush Etzion borders between Jerusalem and Hebron, is a settlement housing approximately two thousand Jewish settlers, with a name that translates to "apple of the eye." Since 1989, it has been inhabited by radical and messianic

²⁹ Menderes Kurt, "Religious Jewish Terrorism in Israel", *Bulletin of Palestine Studies* 4 (2018), 1-26.

³⁰ Ian S. Lustick, Rubin Barry, *Critical Essays on Israeli Society, Politics, and Culture: Books on Israel* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1991), 71.

³¹ Ehud Sprinzak, *Brother Against Brother: Violence and Extremism in Israeli Politics from Altalena to the Rabin Assassination* (New York: Free Press, 1999), 100-101.

³² Richard Gottheil, Samuël Krauss, "Sicarii", *Jewish Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed., Vol. 11 (New York: Funk & Wagnalls), 323-324.

³³ The Pittsburg Press, *Radical Orthodox Group Terrorizes Secular Israelis*, 25 February 1989 (Accessed on 27.10.2024), <https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=ZfgjAAAAIBAI&sjid=0GMEAAAAIBAI&pg=4909,4382253&dq=keshet+bombing&hl=en>

Jews, known for its proximity to Palestinian villages and for repeated attacks against Palestinians.³⁴ Distinct from other radical groups, the Bat Ayin terror organization, primarily comprising young members, has specifically targeted Arab children; it gained notoriety in 2001 for attempting to plant a bomb timed to detonate during recess at an Arab school in Yatta. The group escalated its tactics the following year with a similar attack in Sur Baher, East Jerusalem, concealing a bomb among food packages to target Arab schools.³⁵ During a series of attacks in 2002, several of the group's members were apprehended, its leaders were detained, and its operations were exposed, though many members were released shortly after, and leaders' sentences were subsequently reduced.³⁶

4.1.8. Lehava

Lehava is an ultranationalist movement established in Israel in the 2000s with the stated goal of preventing Jewish assimilation.³⁷ Led by Bentzi Gopstein, the group has advocated for limiting interactions with non-Jews and has launched provocative campaigns against Arabs. Lehava takes a hardline stance against intermarriage, monitoring Jewish women to prevent relationships with non-Jews and disrupting mixed weddings with racist demonstrations. Additionally, it has disseminated discriminatory content against non-Jews through social media, calling for restrictions on celebrating Christian holidays and barring Arabs from specific public spaces. Lehava's leaders have used these activities to deepen societal divisions within Israel, and the movement remains active today.

4.1.9. Sikarikim

The Sikarikim, an anti-Zionist group based in the ultra-Orthodox Jewish neighborhoods of Mea She'arim in Jerusalem and Ramat Beit Shemesh, has been active since 2005. In 2011, the group held a highly publicized protest in Jerusalem, drawing local and international attention by using Holocaust symbols to criticize Israel's secularization and what they perceive as media discrimination against them.³⁸ Declaring themselves under a "genocidal threat," Sikarikim members wore uniforms reminiscent of those used during the Holocaust and resisted opposition with physical force. Additionally, the group gained international coverage for verbally and physically harassing students at the Orot Banot girls' school in Beit Shemesh. Sikarikim has continued its confrontational stance toward the secular community through attacks on cafes where men and women sit together, as well as on bookstores selling Zionist materials, further intensifying its tension with secular Israeli society.³⁹

4.1.10. Kach

The Kach Party, established in 1994 by Rabbi Meir Kahane (1931-1990) as an ultra-religious, nationalist party, left a profound impact on Jewish radicalism through its anti-Arab, racially

³⁴ Michael Feige, *Settling in the Hearts Jewish Fundamentalism in the Occupied Territories* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2009), 178-179.

³⁵ Pedahzur, Perliger, *Jewish Terrorism in Israel*, 119.

³⁶ Pedahzur, Perliger, *Jewish Terrorism in Israel*, 121-122.

³⁷ Lehava, *Our Story*, 2020 (Accessed on 18 October 2024), <https://www.lehava-us.com/our-story/>

³⁸ *Le Monde avec Reuters* (2012, January), *Une manifestation de juifs ultra-orthodoxes choque Israël*, *Le Monde* (Accessed on 17 October 2024), https://www.lemonde.fr/procheorient/article/2012/01/01/une-manifestation-de-juifs-ultra-orthodoxeschoque-israel_1624659_3218.html.

³⁹ Israel Kasnet, "Extreme or mainstream?", *The Jerusalem Post*, 16.12.2011.

charged ideology. Kahane, having previously founded the Jewish Defense League (JDL) in America, used the slogan “Never Again!” to provide anti-Semitism defense training and led attacks on Soviet cultural buildings of diplomatic significance, eventually being investigated by the FBI and subsequently compelled to immigrate to Israel. As a prominent ultra-nationalist figure of his time, Kahane promoted a pure Jewish-centered worldview and drew attention with his powerful rhetoric.⁴⁰ Elected as a Knesset member in 1984, he was ultimately barred from the Israeli parliament in 1988 due to his extreme racist rhetoric. In his writings, Kahane argued for the inherent inequality between Jews and other people, advocating for the establishment of a Jewish theocratic state and intensifying anti-Arab sentiment through explicit calls for violence. Following his assassination in 1990 prior to a lecture in the United States, Kahane continued to be commemorated through the Kahane Chai group and Elnakam organization, both founded by his followers.⁴¹ Known for his vehement criticism of peace talks and secular Jews, Kahane argued that the land of Israel belonged solely to Jews, embodying radical Revisionist Zionism with his offensive language toward Arabs and violent teachings. Disillusioned by the lack of support in the Knesset and branding secular Jews as “Hellenizers,” he founded the radical group Terror Neged Terror (Terror Against Terror) to further his cause.

4.1.11. Terror Neged Terror “TNT”

Founded in 1974 under the slogan “Jewish terror in response to Arab terror,” the group TNT directed numerous violent actions toward Arab-populated areas, particularly in the West Bank. Comprised of Kahane’s students from the U.S. and other countries, this paramilitary group targeted Arab vehicles, markets, mosques, and gas stations, while also sabotaging infrastructure in Arab neighborhoods to worsen the living conditions for Palestinians.⁴² In 1980, Kahane was briefly detained after being caught planning a bombing attack on the Al-Aqsa Mosque.⁴³ Through organizations such as the JDF, Betar, Kach, and TNT, Kahane sought to instill in young minds the vision of a purely Jewish theocratic state, leaving an enduring impact evident in numerous later attacks influenced by his teachings.

4.1.12. The Temple Mount Movement

Following the 1967 War, religious Zionists intensified their focus on the Temple Mount, fostering social awareness around the potential construction of a Third Temple. In pursuit of this goal, organizations like the Temple Mount and Land of Israel Faithful, Machon Ha-Mikdash, and The Movement for the Establishment of the Temple emerged in the 1980s, aiming explicitly to dismantle the Muslim sanctuary to establish a new Jewish temple. These groups, still active today, receive substantial financial and moral support from devout Zionist Jews abroad and evangelical Christians.⁴⁴ The aspiration to rebuild the temple has been adopted by various radical religious factions, leading to multiple attempts to alter the status of the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Such actions began in 1969 when an Australian radical set fire to

⁴⁰ Selin Çağlayan, *İsrail Sözlüğü Siyonistler, Mubalifler, Tarihciler, Eylemciler, Yerleşimciler, İsraililer*, 415.

⁴¹ Chaim Navon, *Genesis and Jewish Thought* (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 2008), 191-192.

⁴² Ahmed Khalifa, “Terrorism in Israel”, *Journal of Palestine Studies* 14/1 (Autumn 1984), 152-157.

⁴³ Menderes Kurt, “Religious Jewish Terrorism in Israel”, *Bulletin of Palestine Studies* 4 (2018), 1-26.

⁴⁴ For detailed information on the topic, see Motti Inbari, *Jewish Fundamentalism and the Temple Mount: Who Will Build the Third Temple?* (New York: SUNY Press., 2009)

the al-Qiblah Mosque and continued with Meir Kahane's followers attempting bomb attacks in 1980, culminating in what is known as the Al-Aqsa Massacre in 1990. Throughout these events, numerous historic structures were damaged, and significant Palestinian casualties and injuries occurred. Many extremist groups perceived these actions on the Al-Aqsa site as steps toward laying the foundations for the Third Temple. Renewed tensions flared on September 23, 1996, with the opening of a tunnel near the Western Wall, resulting in clashes that left 51 Palestinians and 15 Israelis dead and numerous injured in what became known as the "Tunnel Uprising."⁴⁵ Tensions escalated further on September 28, 2000, when Ariel Sharon's visit to the Al-Aqsa compound sparked the Second Intifada.⁴⁶

4.2. Religion-Inspired Individual Terrorist Actions

When examining acts of terrorism driven by religious motivations in Israel, it is evident that radical actions have been carried out not only by organizations but also by individuals. Among these individual acts, one of the most infamous cases is the 1994 Hebron Mosque Massacre, perpetrated by Baruch Goldstein, a fanatical Jew; this event exemplifies a form of anti-Arab hostility that extends into a broader context of xenophobia. A second significant incident is the 1995 assassination of Yitzhak Rabin by Yigal Amir, a momentous act known widely due to extensive global media coverage; however, what notably distinguishes this assassination is that its target was a fellow Jew.

Perpetrators of individual, faith-based acts of terror in Israel have predominantly been young people, with Palestinians and secular Israelis frequently the targets. Such incidents tend to increase in response to government policies, public events, or specific commemorative days; notably, the Jerusalem Gay Pride Parade, initiated in 2002, has become a focal point for recurring violence. For instance, in 2005, Orthodox Jew Yishai Shlissel stabbed several parade participants with the stated motive of "killing in God's name," and in 2015, upon his release, fatally attacked a young person and injured six others during the event.⁴⁷

One of the major issues of individual violence in Israel involves settler terrorism; radical religious settlers, particularly in the West Bank, have illegally occupied areas, leading to significant conflicts. These settlers, driven largely by economic and religious reasons, have continually clashed with local Arab residents over land and water resources. Perhaps the most harrowing example of settler terrorism occurred in 2015 when a Jewish settler set fire to a Palestinian family's home near Nablus, resulting in the tragic deaths of an 18-month-old child and his family.⁴⁸ Additionally, messianic settlers have aimed to destabilize the region further by vandalizing mosques, churches, and other sacred sites, uprooting trees, and burning fields, thereby seeking to make life in the area increasingly difficult.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ IUVMP Press, *Israeli Massacres Against The Aqsa... Scenes of Bloodbaths* (2017, September), (Accessed on 21 October 2024), <https://iuvmpress.com/17133>.

⁴⁶ The Guardian, *Rioting As Sharon Visits Islam Holy Site* (2020, September), (Accessed on 21 October 2024), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2000/sep/29/israel>.

⁴⁷ BBC News, *Man Charged Over Jerusalem Attack* (2005, July) (Accessed on 21 October 2024), http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4653655.stm.

⁴⁸ Aljazeera, *Jewish Settler Convicted in Arson Attack That Killed Palestinians* (2020 May), (Accessed on 28 October 2024), <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/05/jewish-settler-convicted-arson-killed-palestinian-200518075142356.html>.

⁴⁹ For further details, see https://www.btselem.org/topic/settler_violence.

Conclusion

Since the 1880s, the influence of various forms of Zionism on Jewish migration to Palestine has not resulted in a unified alliance among these settlers. Initially, secular and left-leaning figures held dominant positions in the leadership of Zionist diplomatic efforts and in the founding of the Israeli state, thus ensuring the predominance of secular ideologies within Israeli society. This secularization was perceived as an essential step toward building a modern, democratic state, free from the religious constraints of the past. However, as antisemitism intensified across Europe, particularly in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, religious Jewish groups began to migrate to Palestine. Despite their small numbers, these groups initially avoided significant conflict with secular Zionists due to rabbinical efforts aimed at bridging the gap between the secular and religious factions. There was an expectation among secular Zionists that religious Jews would eventually integrate into the new society and abandon their traditional lifestyles. However, this expectation was not fulfilled.

Rather than integrating, certain religious groups increasingly radicalized, seeking to align their traditional religious values with the emerging Zionist project. This shift was precipitated by key historical events, such as the Holocaust, the 1967 Six-Day War, and the Yom Kippur War, which brought religious Zionist groups into the political limelight. These events gave rise to factions that rejected the secular nature of the state and its foundations, leading them to advocate for a theocratic state and to support the expansion of Israel's borders through divine right. As a result, religious Zionist factions began to exert greater political influence, employing violent rhetoric and actions to further their agenda. This radicalization of religious groups marked a significant shift in the Zionist movement, transitioning from a largely secular initiative to one increasingly influenced by religiously motivated politics.

The growing conflict between secular and religious factions deepened social polarization within Israeli society. For some religious groups, the use of violence became justified as a legitimate tool for defending their beliefs and enforcing their vision of Israel as a Jewish state governed by religious law. This violent ideology extended beyond the secular Jewish population, with religious extremists also targeting non-Jews, particularly Palestinians. These actions not only fueled the Israeli-Palestinian conflict but also contributed to a broader societal divide that remains unresolved to this day. The opposition to secular Zionist ideology, rooted in the belief that the state's secular foundations were incompatible with Jewish religious law, spurred many religious groups to take extreme actions in the name of preserving Jewish identity.

The ideological battles between secular and religious factions have become even more pronounced since 1977, with the rise of right-wing political movements in Israel. These movements have advocated for policies that further entrench religious values in public life, exacerbating tensions between religious and secular Jews and between Jews and non-Jews. The political influence of religious Zionism has continued to grow, especially within the context of settlement expansion and policies related to the occupied territories. These divisions and the accompanying social and political conflicts continue to be central issues in Israeli society, deeply affecting the nation's identity and its relationship with the Palestinian population.

This study thus explores the historical development of fundamentalist attitudes within Zionism, concluding that Zionism itself has been one of the most transformative forces in reshaping Jewish identity. The rise of radical religious Zionism has not only reshaped Jewish identity but has also perpetuated a cycle of division, conflict, and ideological confrontation. The consequences of these divisions remain highly relevant today, as the tensions between secular and religious communities continue to define much of Israel's political and social landscape.

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