

Key concepts



Jews believe that the Land of Israel is the place that God promised them as part of the covenant relationship made with Abraham. In the years that followed the Jews established themselves in this land, and Jerusalem became a place of great significance. One of the hills on which the city is set was Mount Zion, and the name came to signify the whole land.

During times of exile, hope remained that the Land of Israel would be restored to them, as expressed in the words of the prophet Amos (9:14-15). Such is the importance of Zion that beliefs which have developed around it have been expressed as 'Zion theology'. The prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah also place great emphasis upon the importance of Zion. Returning to the Land of Israel is a theme within worship, with references in the Amidah, and at Passover.

The 19th century rise of nationalism in response to anti-Semitism is best illustrated by what has become known as the Dreyfus Affair. Dreyfus was a Jew, and also a high-ranking French army officer who was falsely accused and convicted of high treason. Theodor Herzl, an Austrian journalist, was profoundly affected by Dreyfus' situation. In a work entitled 'Der Judenstaat', Herzl argued for the Jews to have a land of their own. The World Zionist Organisation was formed in order to achieve this aim.

The Mizrahi party was established as the religious wing of the Zionist movement with the aim of securing the future of the Jewish people through study of the Torah, observance of the mitzvot and return to the ancient homeland.

The start of the 20th century saw the migration of Jews to Palestine, with Labour Zionism seeking to achieve Jewish national and social fulfilment through the establishment of kibbutzim. The new settlers also sought to create a society based upon the Hebrew language and culture.

In May 1948, the State of Israel was established, although there was opposition to secular Zionism particularly by the Haredim.

Key quotes



"I will restore my people Israel. They shall rebuild ruined cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine; they shall till gardens and eat their fruits. And I will plant them upon their soil, nevermore to be uprooted from the soil I have given them," says the Lord your God.' (Amos 9:14-15)

'In the days to come, the Mount of the Lord's House shall stand firm above the mountains and tower above the hills; and all the nations shall gaze on it with joy.' (Isaiah 2:2)

'Come, let us go up to Zion, to the Lord our God.' (Jeremiah 31:6)

'Next year may we be in Jerusalem; next year may we be free.' (Words spoken at Passover)

'Zionism seeks to establish a home for the Jewish people in Eretz Israel secured under public law.' (First Zionist Conference)

'The Hebrew language will go from the synagogue to the house of study, and from house of study to the school, and from school it will come into the home and ... become a living language.' (Ben Yehuda)

'(In Israel), with its Jewish majority, the problems of religion and state are far from being solved, and Jewish identity and religious observance are at the forefront of the political agenda.' (De Lange)

Key words

Zion	Anti-Semitism	Eretz Israel
Mizrachi	kibbutz	Haredi

Issues for analysis and evaluation

Key questions, arguments, and debates

The validity and strength of the links between Zionism and Judaism.

There are too many differences between Zionism and Judaism to be able to argue for any real, strong, and valid links between the two. Any conclusion depends upon one's understanding of the term Zionism which is ambiguous even within Judaism. There is diversity within Judaism itself about the requirements which need to be satisfied before the return to Israel (or otherwise) can take place.

Whether or not Zionism is specifically a Jewish movement.

There is such a difference between the political and religious recognition of the State of Israel that Zionism could never be said to be described as a specific Jewish movement. It could also be argued that there is no need for such a link anyway because Israel as a secular state is vindicated on this basis alone without Judaism. Zionism weakens Judaism due to its secular nature.