Why, then, does truth generate hatred ... unless it be that truth is loved in such a way that those who love something else besides her wish that to be the truth which they do love. ... Therefore, they hate the truth for the sake of whatever it is that they love in place of the truth.—Augustine of Hippo, Confessions (Bk. X, Ch. XXIII, 34)

1. It could be argued that the real beginnings of the modern resettlement of Erez-Israel ["land of Israel"] by Ashkenazi Jews from Eastern and Central Europe was the doing of the pupils of Rabbi Eliahu, the Gaon [an honorific applied to any person outstandingly gifted in language and art] of Vilna. They were systematic and deliberate. They came to the country in three large organized parties in the years 1808 and 1809 and established their first community in Safed. They intended to remain and conducted their affairs with energy. Hardly had they arrived than they dispatched one of their leaders as an emissary back to the communities from which they had come with a written call to others to join them ... They clearly saw themselves as representatives of the whole people and had no doubt that they had every right to demand of other Jews both material aid and reinforcement in numbers.


2. It is a fact that the Jewish religion is above all Jewish nationalism ... One must be a Jew first and a human being second.


3. For several years, Dr. Moritz Guedemann [Chief Rabbi of Vienna] had been Herzl's only spiritual mentor and intimate confidant, whom he even consulted while preparing his revolutionary book The Jewish State. An entry in [Herzl's] Diaries [dated 27 January 1896] reads: "Guedemann has read the first proofs and writes me in rapture. He believes that the tract will strike like a bombshell, and work wonders.


4. Every group [of Jews colonizing Palestine] will have its Rabbi, travelling with his congregation. Local groups will afterwards form voluntarily about their Rabbi, and each locality will have its spiritual leader. Our Rabbis, on whom we especially call, will devote their energies to the service of our idea, and will inspire their congregations by preaching it from the pulpit. They will not need to address special meetings for the purpose; an appeal such as this may be uttered in the synagogue. And thus it must be done. For we feel our historic affinity only through the faith of our fathers as we have long ago absorbed the languages of different nations to an ineradicable degree.


5. characteristically, on the day [in 1897] before the [first Zionist] Congress opened, a Saturday, Herzl attended the morning service at the local synagogue and was duly honoured by being called to the reading of the Law ...


6. Every believing and conforming Israelite must be Zionist ...


7. Religious zealots and fanatic free-thinkers alike rejoice in the redemption of the soil by Jewish labor, and look upon it as the holiest of human duties.

8. I say on behalf of the Jews that the Bible is our mandate—the Bible, which was written by us, in our own language, Hebrew, in this very country. This is our Mandate. It was the recognition of this right that was expressed in the Balfour Declaration.


9. Israel. Judaism is the soul of which Israel is the body. Living in all parts of the world, Israel has been held together by the ties of a common history, and above all, by the heritage of faith. Though we recognize in the group loyalty of Jews who have become estranged from our religious tradition, a bond which still unites them with us, we maintain that it is by its religion and for its religion that the Jewish people has lived. ... In all lands where our people live, they assume and seek to share loyally the full duties and responsibilities of citizenship and to create seats of Jewish knowledge and religion. In the rehabilitation of Palestine, the land hallowed by memories and hopes, we behold the promise of renewed life for many of our brethren. We affirm the obligation of all Jewry to aid in its upbuilding as a Jewish homeland by endeavoring to make it not only a haven of refuge for the oppressed but also a center of Jewish culture and spiritual life.


10. Zionism is not a secularist movement. It has its origins and roots in the authoritative religious texts of Judaism. Scripture and rabbinical literature alike are replete with the promise of the restoration of Israel to its ancestral home. Anti-Zionism, not Zionism, is a departure from the Jewish religion ... Nor is Zionism a denial of the universalistic teachings of Judaism. Universalism is not a contradiction of nationalism.

Source: American Emergency Committee for Zionist Affairs, Zionism: An Affirmation of Judaism. (New York, 1942). The complete statement is included at the end of this compilation and is more than 1,400 words long and was signed by 757 rabbis (“the largest number of rabbis whose signatures are attached to a public pronouncement in all Jewish history”). The statement was released to the press on November 20, 1942, by that time 818 rabbis had signed on. It also appears in abridged form in Samuel Halperin's The Political World of American Zionism (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1961) p. 333.

11. I make no apology for having called upon the Anglo-Jewish community to mobilise all its resources in the defence of Israel. Nor will I ever be deterred from doing my religious and moral duty in this moment of our people's anguish ...

Source: Chief Rabbi of Britain Sir Immanuel Jakobovits on the first day of the Six-Day War which Israel started on June 5, 1967. Quoted by Jakobovits, op. cit., p. 16.

12. Everything we are as Jews ... comes directly from the Bible. In size we are nothing as a people and never have been. Had we not been children of the Book, who would have heard of us? ...

As to the Jews, I can only point to our Bible and to its sequence in the many Jewish initiatives to regain Israel stretching across the centuries since Masada and say: This is our Mandate. Come see for yourselves ...

I believe profoundly in the God of Jeremiah and Elijah. Indeed, I consider it part of the Jewish heritage and the Jewish obligation to hold to this concept of God ...

Certainly in Israel today we are Messianic. The Jews feel themselves to have a mission here; they have a sense of mission. Restoration of sovereignty is tied to a concept of redemption. This had determined Jewish survival and it is the core of Jewish religious, moral and national consciousness. It explains the immigration to Israel of hundreds of thousands of Jews who never heard of Zionist doctrine but who, nevertheless, were moved to leave the lands wherein they dwelt to contribute with their own effort to the revival of the Hebrew nation in its historic home.
13. It is bound to become increasingly clear that only religious Jews will prevent the bonds between Israel and the Diaspora from snapping. They will be recognized as the upholders of Jewish integrity in the future, just as they were acknowledged as the champions of the Jewish heritage in the past. Without them there would be no Judaism today and no Jewish people tomorrow.


14. The origins of the Zionist idea are of course entirely religious. The slogan "The Bible is our mandate" is a credo hardly less insistently pleaded by many secularists than by religious believers as the principal basis of our legal and historical claim to the land of Israeli ... Modern Political Zionism itself could never have taken root if it had not planted its seeds in soil ploughed and fertilised by the millennial conditioning of religious memories, hopes, prayers, and visions of our eventual return to Zion ... No rabbinical authority disputes that our claim to a Divine Mandate (and we have no other which can not be invalidated) extends over the entire Holy Land within its historic borders and that halachically we have no right to surrender this claim.


15. anti-Zionists would be hard put to find any affirmatively identifying Jew who would not view them as mortal enemies. Studies and opinion polls have shown that 99 percent of American Jewry identifies with the right of Jews to the Jewish state. For religious Jews, as we have seen, Israel and Jewish nationhood are part of their religious creed. An anti-Zionist is therefore an enemy of religious Jews. As for secular Jews, anti-Zionists oppose the one aspect of Judaism which they passionately affirm—Israel. The only Jews who could see anti-Zionism as anything other than an expression of antisemitism affirm neither Jewish nationhood nor the Jewish religion.


16. Conservative Judaism is best understood as a sacred cluster of core values ...

The centrality of modern Israel heads our list of core values. For Conservative Jews, as for their ancestors, Israel is not only the birthplace of the Jewish people, but also its final destiny. Sacred texts, historical experience and liturgical memory have conspired to make it for them, in the words of Ezekiel, "the most desirable of all lands (20:6)." Its welfare is never out of mind. Conservative Jews are the backbone of Federation leadership in North America and the major source of its annual campaign. They visit Israel, send their children over a summer or for a year and support financially every one of its worthy institutions. Israeli accomplishments on the battlefield and in the laboratory, in literature and politics, fill them with pride ...

And their behavior reflects the dominant thrust of Conservative Judaism not to denationalize Judaism. Even in the era of emancipation, Zion remained the goal, as it was for the Torah, an arena in which to translate monotheism into social justice. A world governed by realpolitik needed a polity of a different order. The liturgy of the Conservative synagogue preserved the full text of the daily amida (the silent devotion) with its frequent pleas for the restoration of Zion. Heinrich Graetz, who taught at the movement's rabbinical seminary in Breslau and authored the most nationalistic history of the Jews ever written, inspired Moses Hess to pen one of the earliest Zionist tracts in 1862 ...

the miracle and mystery of Israel's restoration after two millennia out of the ashes of the Holocaust continues to overwhelm Conservative Jews with radical amazement and deep joy.

17. Where is it possible to find a group of Jews who are committed to Israel, and whose children are likely to honor that commitment? The answer is, in a synagogue on the Sabbath.


18. We are committed to (Medinat Yisrael), the State of Israel, and rejoice in its accomplishments. We affirm the unique qualities of living in (Eretz Yisrael), the land of Israel, and encourage (aliyah), immigration to Israel.


19. For some Jews, Zionism is a movement attributed to Theodore Herzl. Others, such as the Reform community, were anti-Zionists until, and even after, the establishment of the State of Israel. However, for the Orthodox community, Zionism far pre-dates Herzl. Our longing to return to Zion and Jerusalem is beautifully detailed in our siddur [prayer book], Haggadah [liturgical text for a Passover seder] and texts too numerous to count. Certainly the concepts of Jewish peoplehood and statehood are not 50 or 100 years old, but rather 3,500 years old.

HaRav ["the great rabbi"] Tzvi Yehuda HaCohen Kook, zt"l ["may the memory of the righteous be for blessing"], wrote, 'The establishment of Jewish sovereignty over the Land of Israel is a fundamental precept of the Torah.' Speaking of the State, Rav Kook wrote, 'The Statehood of Israel is totally kadosh ["sacred" or "holy"] without any blemish at all. It is the Divine, exalted revelation of "who returns His Divine Presence to Zion." ' Rav Kook taught that 'secularism' does not lessen the kedushah ["holiness"] of the State ...

Religious Zionism integrates a love for the Land of Israel with a love for the Torah. Religious Zionism unites Am Yisrael ["people of Israel"] with the belief that part of each Jewish soul is inextricably linked with the fate of Eretz Yisrael ["land of Israel"] and Medinat Yisrael ["state of Israel"]. To us, the creation of the State, the Six Day War, and the miracles associated with bringing Soviet and Ethiopian Jews to Israel represent aschulat d’geulah, the beginning of the Redemption ...

Though the Orthodox Union has never been affiliated with any political organization in Israel, through its actions, the Union is truly the best representative of the Religious Zionist movement in America. The Union's philosophy strongly supports the State of Israel.

Source: Mandell I. Ganchrow, M.D. "A Renewed Call for Religious Zionism." Jewish Action. Spring, 1998. Jewish Action is an official publication of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, commonly known as the Orthodox Union (OU). Dr. Ganchrow was the president of the OU, 1994-2000.

20. The ideological defences of Israeli policies are usually based on Jewish religious beliefs or, in the case of secular Jews, on the 'historical rights' of the Jews which derive from those beliefs and retain the dogmatic character of religious faith ...

close analysis of Israeli grand strategies and actual principles of foreign policy, as they are expressed in Hebrew, makes it clear that it is 'Jewish ideology,' more than any other factor, which determines actual Israeli policies. The disregard of Judaism as it really is and of 'Jewish ideology' makes those policies incomprehensible to foreign observers who usually know nothing about Judaism except crude apologetics ...

The existence of an important component of Israeli policy, which is based on 'Jewish ideology,' makes its analysis politically imperative. This ideology is, in turn based on the attitudes of historic Judaism to non-Jews, ... Those attitudes necessarily influence many Jews, consciously or unconsciously. Our task here is to discuss historic Judaism in real terms ...

Although the struggle against antisemitism (and of all other forms of racism) should never cease, the struggle against Jewish chauvinism and exclusivism, which must include a critique of classical Judaism, is now of equal or greater importance.

Zionism
An Affirmation
of Judaism

A Reply by 757 Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Rabbis of America to a Statement Issued by Ninety Members of the Reform Rabbinate Charging That Zionism Is Incompatible with the Teachings of Judaism


WE, THE UNDERSIGNED RABBIS of all elements in American Jewish religious life, have noted with concern a statement by ninety of our colleagues in which they repudiate Zionism on the ground that it is inconsistent with Jewish religious and moral doctrine. This statement misrepresents Zionism and misinterprets historic Jewish religious teaching, and we should be derelict in our duty if we did not correct the misapprehensions which it is likely to foster.

We call attention in the first place to the fact that the signatories to this statement, for whom as fellow-Rabbis we have a high regard, represent no more than a very small fraction of the American rabbinate. They constitute a minority even of the rabbinate of Reform Judaism with which they are associated. The overwhelming majority of American Rabbis regard Zionism not only as fully consistent with Judaism but as a logical expression and implementation of it.

Our colleagues concede the need for Jewish immigration into Palestine as contributing towards a solution of the vast tragedy of Jewish homelessness. They profess themselves ready to encourage such settlement. They are aware of the important achievements, social and spiritual, of the Palestinian Jewish community and they pledge to it their unstinted support. And yet, subscribing to every practical accomplishment of Zionism, they have embarked upon a public criticism of it. In explanation of their opposition they advance the consideration that Zionism is nationalistic and secularistic. On both scores they maintain it is incompatible with the Jewish religion and its universalistic outlook. They protest against the political emphasis which, they say, is now paramount in the Zionist program and which, according to them, tends to confuse both Jews and Christians as to the place and function of the Jewish group in American society. They appeal to the prophets of ancient Israel for substantiation of their views.

TREASURING the doctrines and moral principles of our faith no less than they, devoted equally to America and its democratic processes and spirit, we nonetheless find every one of their contentions totally without foundation.
Zionism is not a secularist movement. It has its origins and roots in the authoritative religious texts of Judaism. Scripture and rabbinical literature alike are replete with the promise of the restoration of Israel to its ancestral home. Anti-Zionism, not Zionism, is a departure from the Jewish religion. Nothing in the entire pronouncement of our colleagues is more painful than their appeal to the prophets of Israel—to those very prophets whose inspired and recorded words of national rebirth and restoration nurtured and sustained the hope of Israel throughout the ages.

Nor is Zionism a denial of the universalistic teachings of Judaism. Universalism is not a contradiction of nationalism. Nationalism as such, whether it be English, French, American or Jewish, is not in itself evil. It is only militaristic and chauvinistic nationalism, that nationalism which shamelessly flouts all mandates of international morality, which is evil. The prophets of Israel looked forward to the time not when all national entities would be obliterated, but when all nations would walk in the light of the Lord, live by His law and learn war no more.

Our colleagues find themselves unable to subscribe to the political emphasis "now paramount in the Zionist program." We fail to perceive what it is to which they object. Is it to the fact that there are a regularly constituted Zionist organization and a Jewish Agency which deal with the mandatory government, the Colonial office, the League of Nations and other recognized political bodies? But obviously, even immigration and colonization are practical matters which require political action. The settlement of a half million Jews in Palestine since the last war was made possible by political action which culminated in the Balfour Declaration and the Palestine Mandate. There can be little hope of opening the doors of Palestine for mass Jewish immigration after the war without effective political action.

Or is it that they object to the ultimate achievement by the Jewish community of Palestine of some form of Jewish statehood? We are not so bold as to predict the nature of the international order which will emerge from the present war. It is altogether likely, and indeed it may be desirable, that all sovereign states shall under the coming peace surrender some of their sovereignty to achieve a just and peaceful world society.

Certainly our colleagues will allow to the Jews of Palestine the same rights that are allowed to all other peoples resident on their own land. If Jews should ultimately come to constitute a majority of the population of Palestine, would our colleagues suggest that all other peoples in the post-war world shall be entitled to political self-determination, whatever form that may take, but the Jewish people in Palestine shall not have such a right? Or do they mean to suggest that the Jews in Palestine shall forever remain a minority in order not to achieve such political self-determination?

PROTESTING their sympathy both for the homeless Jews of the world and for their brethren in Palestine, our colleagues have by their pronouncement done all these a grave disservice. It may well be that to the degree to which their efforts arc at all effective, Jews who might otherwise have found a haven in Palestine will be denied one. The enemies of the Jewish homeland will be strengthened in their propaganda as a result of the aid which these Rabbis have given them. To the Jews of Palestine, facing the gravest danger in their history and fighting hard to maintain morale and hope in the teeth of the totalitarian menace, this pronouncement comes as a cruel blow.

We do not mean to imply that our colleagues intended it as such. We have no doubt that they are earnest about their finespun theoretical objections to Zionism. We hold, however, that these objections have no merit, and further that voicing them at this time has been unwise and unkind.

We have not the least fear that our fellow Americans will be led to misconstrue the attitudes of American Jews to America because of their interest in Zionism. Every fair-minded American knows that American Jews have only one political allegiance—and that is to America. There is nothing in Zionism to impair this
loyalty. Zionism has been endorsed in our generation by every President from Woodrow Wilson to Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and has been approved by the Congress of the United States. The noblest spirits in American life, statesmen, scholars, writers, ministers and leaders of labor and industry, have lent their sympathy and encouragement to the movement.

Jews, and all non-Jews who are sympathetically interested in the plight of Jewry, should bear in mind that the defeat of Hitler will not of itself normalize Jewish life in Europe. An Allied peace which will not frankly face the problem of the national homelessness of the Jewish people will leave the age-old tragic status of European Jewry unchanged. The Jewish people is in danger of emerging from this war not only more torn and broken than any other people, but also without any prospects of a better and more secure future and without the hope that such tragedies will not recur again, and again. Following an Allied victory, the Jews of Europe, we are confident, will be restored to their political rights and to equality of citizenship. But they possessed these rights after the last war and yet the past twenty-five years have witnessed a rapid and appalling deterioration in their position. In any case, even after peace is restored Europe will be so ravaged and war-torn that large masses of Jews will elect migration to Palestine as a solution of their personal problems. Indeed, for most of these there may be no other substantial hope of economic, social and spiritual rehabilitation.

THE freedom which, we have faith, will come to all men and nations after this war, must come not only to Jews as individuals wherever they live, permitting them to share freedom on a plane of equality with all other men, but also to the Jewish people, as such, restored in its homeland, where at long last it will be a free people within a world federation of free peoples.

Of the 757 Rabbis listed below [names omitted], 214 are members of the Central Conference of American Rabbis (Reform); 247 are members of the Rabbinical Assembly of America (Conservative); and the rest are affiliated with the Rabbinical Council of America (Orthodox) or the Union of Orthodox Rabbis. The total represents the largest number of rabbis whose signatures are attached to a public pronouncement in all Jewish history.