



Yeshiva University
THE ZAHAVA AND MOSHAEL STRAUS
CENTER FOR TORAH AND WESTERN THOUGHT

Zionist Political Thought: Arguing Zionism

Yeshiva University, Spring 2021

Rabbi Dr. Meir Soloveichik, Dr. Neil Rogachevsky and Dr. Liel Leibovitz

Course Description

What is Zionism? The question is trickier than it seems. On the surface, it is a movement advocating for the establishment of a national Jewish homeland as a sovereign state. Yet even now, seven decades after this movement achieved its goal, arguments continue about Zionism's aims and essence. Rightly understood, these contemporary debates are rooted in arguments that occurred early in Israel's history, between thinkers, writers, statesman, and rabbinic figures. This course aims to illustrate how Israel today can be best understood by an in-depth study of the history of these debates, and of the original writings of those who partook in them. Over the semester, we will analyze various arguments that have historically defined Zionism and that continue to shape it today.

Expectations

Readings and preparatory questions will be issued every week. Students will be expected to carefully prepare the readings, and submit, before each class, a short weekly written reflection in response to the questions. There will also be a final paper and exam at the end of the semester. More information on that will be made available as the closing weeks of the course get closer.

Grading

40%: Class participation and reading response
35%: Final essay
25%: Final exam

Contact Information

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Schedule

Week 1: Zionism in Comparative Political Perspective (Jan. 20)

1. [Selections from George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*](#)



Week 2: The First Argument - The Proto-Zionists vs. the Rest of the World (Jan. 25/Jan.27)

1. Leo Pinsker, *Auto-Emancipation*
2. Selections from Moses Hess, *Rome and Jerusalem*
3. Selections from Theodor Herzl, *The Jewish State*

Week 3: The Second Argument - Israel vs. Uganda: What is the Jewish Homeland? (Feb. 1/Feb.3)

1. Isaiah Friedman, "[Gola ve'Eretz Yisrael](#)" (in Hebrew)
2. Yossi Goldstein, "[Usishkin ve'Parashat Uganda: Bein Idiologia le'Politika](#)" (in Hebrew)

Week 4: The Third Argument - Cultural Zionism vs. Political Zionism, Herzl vs. Ahad Ha'Am (Feb. 8/Feb. 10)

1. Haim Yehuda Ruth, "Mavo Le'Kitvei Echad Ha'am," Parts [I](#) and [II](#) (in Hebrew)
2. Ahad Ha'Am, "[Lo Zeh Ha'Derech](#)"
3. Hillel Halkin, "What Ahad Ha-Am Saw and Herzl Missed - and Vice-Versa"

Week 5: The Fourth Argument - The Birth and Early Arguments of Religious Zionism (Feb. 15/Feb. 17)

1. Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer, *Derishat Zion*
2. Yehuda Gelman, "[Tzion ve'Yerushalaim: Ha'Medina Ha'Yehudit al pi Harav Avraham Yitzhak Kook](#)" (in Hebrew)
3. Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, selections
4. Meir Bar-Ilan, selections

Week 6: The Fifth Argument: Socialism, Liberalism, Conservatism in Debate (Feb 22/Feb. 24)

1. Neil Rogachevsky: "[The Not-So-Strange-Death of Labor Zionism](#)"
Ze'ev Sternhell: *The Founding Myths of Israel* (excerpts)
2. Ruth Wisse, *Jews and Power*, selections
3. Borochoy: Nationalism and the Class Struggle

Weeks 7 and 8: The Sixth Argument: Jabotinsky vs. Ben-Gurion, Revisionist Zionism vs. the Establishment (March 1/March 3, March 8/March 10)

1. Ze'ev Jabotinsky, selections (The Iron Wall)
2. Halkin: *Jabotinsky*, chapter in *Menachem Begin's Zionist Legacy*
3. Menachem Begin, *The Revolt*, selections
4. Ben-Gurion: "Against the Constitution"

Week 9: The Seventh Argument: The Debate over the Declaration (March 15/March 17)

1. Martin Kramer, selections



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2. Neil Rogachevsky, selections

Week 10: The Eighth Argument: Ben Gurion versus Begin, or the Painful Question of Reparations from Germany (March 22)

1. Amos Karmel, "[Pragmatism Musari](#)" (in Hebrew)
2. Selections from Tom Segev, *Ha'Million Ha'Shvi'i* (in Hebrew)
3. Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, selections

Pesach Break (March 25 – April 5)

Week 11: The Ninth Argument: The State of Israel versus Hannah Arendt on the Eichmann Trial (April 7)

1. Selections from Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*
2. Gershom Scholem, "[Mikhtav le'Chanah Arendt](#)" (in Hebrew)
3. Norman Podhoretz, "Hannah Arendt on Eichmann"

Weeks 12-13 : The Tenth Argument: Messianism, Judaism, and the future of Religious Zionism (April 12/April 14, April 19/April 21)

1. Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook, Selections
2. Sarah Yael Hirschorn, "City on a Hilltop: American Jews and the Israeli Settler Movement"
3. Gadi Taub, *The Settlers and the Meaning of Zionism*
4. Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, *Kol Dodi Dofek* and *Hamesh Derashot*

Weeks 14-15: Zionism, Post Zionism and the Jewish Future (April 26/April 28/May 3)

Readings TBA