

From The Narrow Bridge Fellows at Brown University

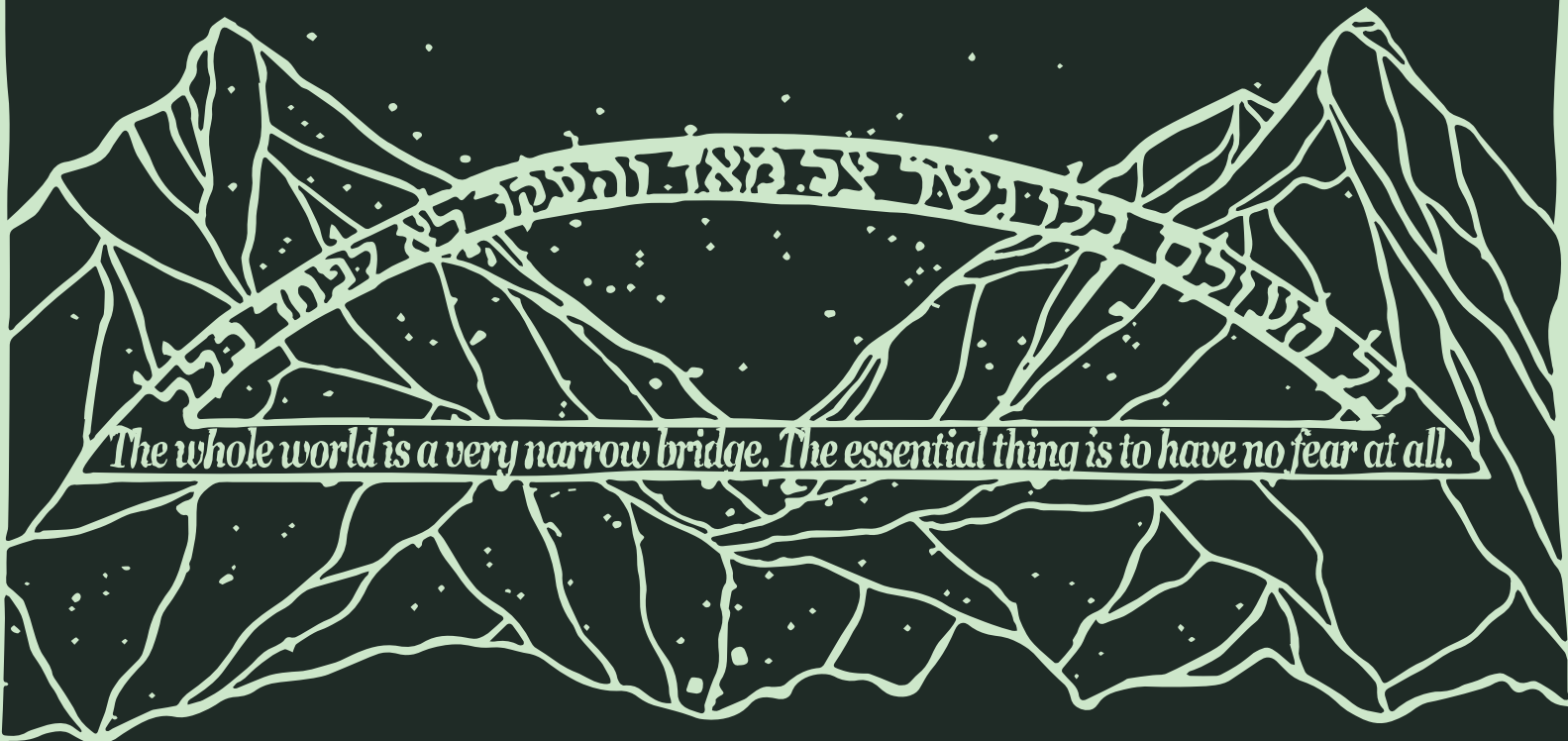
LOVE THY NEIGHBOR

— a GUIDE for —

TACKLING ANTISEMITISM

— WHILE —

COMMITTING TO JUSTICE FOR ALL



The whole world is a very narrow bridge. The essential thing is to have no fear at all.

Rabbi Abba said in the name of Shmuel: For three years the academy of Shammai and the academy of Hillel argued. One group asserted, "The law follows our views," and the other asserted, "The law follows our views." A Heavenly voice came down and announced, "They are both the words of the living God, but the law follows the academy of Hillel." Since both were the words of the living God, what entitled the academy of Hillel to have the law agree with them? Because they were kind and humble, they studied their own rulings and those of the academy of Shammai, and not only that, they mentioned the rulings of the academy of Shammai before their own.

Babylonian Talmud, Eiruvin 13b

Rabbi Tarfon and the Elders were once reclining in the upper story of Nithza's house, in Lydda, when the following question was raised before them: "Is study or action greater?" R. Tarfon answered, saying "Action is greater." R. Akiva answered, saying "Study is greater." Then they all answered and said, "Study is greater, for it leads to action."

Babylonian Talmud, Kiddushin 40b

In this book, we've endeavored to capture months of studying one another's arguments – hopefully with humility and kindness – and to share what we've learned. We pray that our readers help bring our study towards meaningful and productive action.

The 2020-21 Narrow Bridge Fellows

LOVE THY NEIGHBOR: a Guide for Tackling Antisemitism While Committing to Justice for All

From the Narrow Bridge Fellows at Brown University

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What is This Guidebook?

Introduction

Welcome to *Love Thy Neighbor: A Guide for Tackling Antisemitism While Committing to Justice for All!* This guidebook is a resource designed to identify, confront, and unpack the complicated issue of **antisemitism**, a term that refers to the oppression of and discrimination against Jewish people. The title, “Love Thy Neighbor,” comes from a verse in the Torah in which God instructs God’s people, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18). As the topic of antisemitism has become increasingly fraught in recent years, we have felt the need to encourage our non-Jewish allies to stand up for us as Jews, as well as ensure that our own self-advocacy does not come at the expense of others'. Our chosen title thus reflects our central purpose to cultivate more compassionate conversations with our Jewish and non-Jewish neighbors about **Zionism, Israel/Palestine, Judaism**, and antisemitism, keeping in mind the narratives of both Jews and Palestinians.

Love Thy Neighbor was created out of a need for clarity. The students who have worked to bring this guidebook to life sensed confusion and a lack of understanding, both within ourselves and amongst our peers, around the topic of antisemitism – politics and identity aside. Yep, you heard that correctly: this is a resource intended to help any and every reader engage in dialogue that productively combats antisemitism. Whether you consider yourself ideologically **left, right**, or center, this guide is for you.

We believe that antisemitism can only be effectively addressed through a combination of education and relationships. This guidebook is an attempt at the former. As for the relationships, we encourage our readers to take what they learn here and discuss it with friends, peers, and mentors who may have differing views. We'd also love for you to let us know what you think (email us at narrowbridgeproject@brown.edu)! Everyone has blind spots when it comes to antisemitism, and none of us can successfully fight this issue on our own.



Purpose:

Building upon months of extensive research, close study, and a pilot training program at Brown University, this guidebook seeks to show readers the web of history and experiences that make up the hows, whys, and whats of antisemitism, in the hopes of accomplishing the following five goals.

- 1 Locate antisemitism within its historical, political, and social contexts.
- 2 Increase capacity for understanding, identifying, and confronting antisemitism, including its relationship to both Zionism and anti-Zionism.
- 3 Facilitate more productive discussions about antisemitism amongst all people, Zionists and anti-Zionists in particular.
- 4 Prevent conversation about Israel/Palestine from veering into antisemitism.
- 5 Prevent activism against anti-semitism from shutting down pro-Palestinian activism.

Who We Are

The Narrow Bridge Project & Fellowship

The Narrow Bridge Project (NBP), created and facilitated by Rabbi Michelle Dardashti, is a collaboration between Brown RISD Hillel and the Brown Office of the Chaplains and Religious Life, and is funded by the Dorot Foundation. “Narrow Bridge” comes from a teaching of Rebbe Nachman of Breslov, as published in his 1808 magnum opus, *Likutei Moharan*: “The whole world is a very narrow bridge, and the most important part is not to be afraid” (Likutei Moharan, Part II, 48:2). NBP is an application-based student cohort experience, which meets to discuss the past, present, and future of Jewish peoplehood, Zionism, and antisemitism, our differing definitions of each of these, and how these diverse understandings impact our Judaism, activism, and life experiences as Jews today. NBP is a radical strategy for addressing a diminishing sense of Jewish peoplehood, rising bilateral antisemitism, and the flammable subject of Israel/Palestine on campus. It is rooted in a belief that positive developments in any of these realms necessitates Jews discussing the interconnectedness of all three subjects, together, across divides. The learning draws from current events and students’ lived experiences as Jews at Brown University in dramatic times, and from a broad range of written resources spanning political and ideological spectrums.

The Narrow Bridge Fellowship is an extension of the Narrow Bridge Project, through which select graduates of NBP work with Rabbi Dardashti to extract and adapt the learnings from their work to be shared more broadly. We are the Narrow Bridge Fellows of 2020-2021, and we have created this resource in the hopes of consolidating our learnings and making them more accessible and impactful for others.



'20-21 Narrow Bridge Fellows



Andrew Steinberg

He/Him

International & Public Affairs '22
Newton, MA
Fall-Spring Research Fellow

I grew up in an old-growth, primarily Ashkenazi Jewish neighborhood. My family had been to the same synagogue, Mishkan Tefila, for 60 years. I went to preschool, youth classes, and got Bar Mitzvahed there, but soon afterward, Mishkan closed. At the same time, I started attending the Roxbury Latin School in Boston, a secular school that was steeped deeply in Protestant tradition and had few Jewish students. As a student of international relations, Israel and Zionism became an increasing part of my Jewish identity, culminating in a 2014 visit in which I witnessed the beginning of the war between Israel and Gaza. At Brown, I joined and became a leader of Brown Students for Israel (BSI), an organization for students to learn about Israel, its people, and its connection to global Jewry. Until college, I never interrogated my Zionism. I had learned how to fight, but not how to think and heal. During the divestment referendum and campaign, I saw the Brown community split itself with harmful rhetoric that did not advance solutions. I also saw how the lack of consensus on "-isms" led to further misunderstandings and pain. As someone who is committed to Jewish peoplehood and social justice, I joined NBP to find a space to be vulnerable and form my own opinions. I am proud to share this project because it asks the important questions to help us have the difficult conversations we need to move forward.



Elana Nussbaum Cohen

She/Her

Sociology '23.5
Brooklyn, NY
Fall-Spring Research Fellow

I attended pluralistic Jewish day schools from kindergarten through 12th grade, and my experience of 13 years of Jewish education heavily informed my views on issues related to Israel, Palestine, Zionism and antisemitism. For the first 18 years of my life, my Zionism was completely passive. It was only when my older siblings went to college and started critically engaging with issues related to Israel and Palestine that I began to hear the terms "occupation" and "BDS" and look more closely at the facts and narratives that were excluded from my Israel education at Jewish school. I felt like my eyes were opened to a world of information and stories that had been hidden from me, and it motivated me to get involved with J Street U and anti-occupation work more broadly. When I came to Brown, I really wanted to engage with perspectives that differed from mine in order to rectify the gaps in my education. Arriving at Brown right after a divestment referendum, I felt like there was no opportunity to engage across ideological lines – the campus climate was very divided. For me, NBF was an opportunity to build relationships, listen to and engage with perspectives that differ from mine, and better understand antisemitism to more critically engage with issues around Israel and Palestine.



Hannah Gelman

She/Her

Religious & Judaic Studies '22
New Orleans, LA
Summer-Fall Writing & Graphic
Design Fellow

There were very few Jews where I grew up, so I experienced a lot of blatant antisemitism and a general lack of knowledge about Israel/Palestine (among Jews and non-Jews). The scarce Israel education I received at synagogue and summer camp taught me that Israel was a faraway Jewish paradise, which was also in vague, imminent danger, and must be protected at all costs. I first encountered Israel/Palestine activism when I arrived at Brown, and was quickly overwhelmed by the fact that Jews around me seemed deeply invested in an issue which I had rarely even considered. Over the past three years, I have dedicated my personal, spiritual, and academic work to dismantling the narratives I had previously learned about Israel/Palestine and constructing my own, with the hopes of creating spaces where Jewish students can learn about and practice Judaism across political lines. This project is a part of that goal.



Isaac Goldman Sonnenfeldt

He/Him

Environmental Studies '22.5
New York, NY
Fall-Spring Research Fellow
Summer-Fall Writing & Design Fellow

I was born and raised on the Upper West Side, a community that my family refers to as "the shtetl" (small towns of Jews that existed in Central and Eastern Europe before WWII). I went to Jewish day school, Jewish summer camp (for a year), and was part of my synagogues youth leadership group. In high school, I moved to a secular but still majority-Jewish high school, and it was not until I came to Brown that I was in the minority as a Jew, and was expected to speak about my relatively intimate connection to the land of Israel. Though I had spent time in high school studying and combatting political extremism and division in America through an exchange program with a rural, North Carolina high school, I had never needed to apply this learning to the issues of Israel or Zionism. In joining NBP I was able to engage with these issues on an intellectual and academic level, and found immense meaning, both in terms of examining my Jewish identity, and also in having a broader impact on the issues, in participating in this project for the past two years.



Maya Dayan

She/Her

Applied Math & Public Policy '21
Boulder, CO
Fall-Spring Research Fellow

I was born in Tel Aviv but moved to the United States when I was one. My grandparents all still live in Israel, and three of the four were born in Mandatory Palestine before Israeli independence. My family is generally left-wing in terms of Israeli politics, but my first real involvement with the conflict came in high school. I heard a talk from members of Doctors Without Borders who had served in Palestine, where they recounted the horrors they had seen. Following the talk, I decided to get involved with the Daughters for Life Foundation. Another transformational experience for me was attending United World College and making a close Palestinian friend. As a result, I decided that my activism on the issue would be alongside Palestinians, fighting for the justice they had been denied. At Brown I was a member of Students for Justice in Palestine and Brown Divest and became an NBF fellow to learn and grow with a group of Jewish students also engaged in this activism.

Our Mentor



Rabbi Michelle Dardashti
She/Her
Rabbi, Brown RISD Hillel
Brown Associate Chaplain for
the Jewish Community

Rabbi Dardashti was ordained and received a Masters in Jewish Education from the Jewish Theological Seminary. She is trained in Congregation-Based Community Organizing and came to Brown after serving as the Marshall T. Meyer Fellow at Congregation B'nai Jeshurun in Manhattan and Director of Community Engagement at Temple Beth El in Stamford. The daughter of an American folk-singer/teacher and an Iranian-born cantor, RMD (as she's known on campus) was raised on a brand of Judaism which is multicultural, meta-denominational, musical, and global – she became a rabbi to share the gifts her parents' eclectic Judaism afforded her: passion, hope, wonder, gratitude, empathy, responsibility, and joy; she came to Brown to nourish a Judaism that's broad, deep, and engaged with the world. She has spent time living and working in the Jewish community of Montevideo, Uruguay as well as four years in Jerusalem, where she was a student at the Hebrew University, a Dorot Fellow, and a volunteer and staff member at a number of NGOs furthering democracy, dialogue, and cross-cultural education. In her eight years on College Hill, Rabbi Dardashti has created initiatives that critically explore allyship, activism and American Jewish positionality today; among these are the Hillel Initiative on Racial Awareness and Justice and the Narrow Bridge Project.

A Note on Positionality

We want to be as responsible as possible with the material we are sharing with our readers, and we believe that acknowledging our position as white, American, Jewish students attending a private university is a part of that process. Our political diversity is significant, yet we cannot avoid the fact that our perspectives on antisemitism are inevitably shaped by our lived experiences and significant privilege.

We created this guidebook in order to present a broad spectrum of ideas and viewpoints, including those that differ from our own. While we have incorporated anecdotes of our own encounters with antisemitism, we have worked not to speak on behalf of others, using quotes from individuals rather than assuming their experiences. *We also know we're not experts.* As a result, we have supplemented our own analysis with that of authorities in their fields.



We have done our best to present this material in the most nuanced, balanced way possible. One of the major lessons we learned while creating this resource is that we all have blindspots – no one can perfectly capture the sticky subject of antisemitism. We believe that owning these shortcomings is a prerequisite for respectful and productive engagement, and want to set that example for our readers. And we look forward to you helping us locate where our own blindspots still lie. You can reach us at narrowbridgeproject@brown.edu.

Why Now

Antisemitism is alive and well in the United States, ranging from physical violence, to propagation of harmful tropes and stereotypes, to placing advocacy on behalf of Jews in conflict with advocacy on behalf of other marginalized groups. In 2016, Donald Trump

tweeted a picture of Hillary Clinton's face atop a pile of cash and next to a **Star of David** inscribed with "Most Corrupt Candidate Ever!" In 2018, an armed man massacred 11 congregants attending Shabbat morning services at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh after posting antisemitic slurs on an **alt-right** social network. In 2019, the Anti-Defamation League reported that U.S. antisemitic incidents had hit an all-time high, reaching 2,107 instances of assault, harassment, and vandalism.¹ In 2021, when the U.S. Capitol was stormed by right-wing extremists,

one man was photographed wearing a shirt that read "Camp Auschwitz" and "Work Brings Freedom," the slogan that hung over the gates of concentration camps across **Nazi** Germany. These are but some of the most famous recent cases of antisemitism in the United States. All the while, Jewish and non-Jewish groups across the country have been jockeying in favor of their particular definitions and analyses of antisemitism – ultimately fighting about antisemitism, rather than against it. Recent debate surrounding the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) definition of antisemitism, adopted by the U.S. Department of State in 2018, exemplifies the fever pitch that intercommunal conversations about antisemitism have reached.²



U.S. Antisemitic Incidents Remained at Historic High in 2020

Annual ADL Audit tracks 2,000+ incidents across the U.S., third-highest yearly total on record



Who This Guide is For

This guidebook is for anyone who has noticed that antisemitism is complicated and wants to better their understanding and/or activism. Whether you're Jewish or not, liberal or conservative, Zionist, **anti-Zionist**, or not quite sure, we have good news: this guidebook is for you! We are, however, primarily orienting this resource towards Americans because we are coming from an American context. That being said, the pages to come will explore examples of antisemitism from all over the world in order to broaden understandings of antisemitism as a whole. We also compiled this resource with and for individuals on college campuses. But, if you're not in this space, don't worry – this book is for you regardless! Please share with friends, family, and strangers alike.



How to Use This Guide

This guidebook is divided into several chapters, each framed as broad questions probing the hows, whys, and whats of antisemitism. Each chapter is further divided into sections and subsections which address these questions using explanations and examples synthesized from our research and study, as well as our personal experiences. We recommend that readers read this guidebook in its entirety, since each issue is closely intertwined – and the better we understand each aspect of antisemitism, the better we will understand it as a whole. That being said, this guidebook is designed so that readers can also select which chapters, sections, or subsections feel the most relevant

to their personal learning needs. We have included a glossary of terms that might be helpful to have explained at the end of the book (see "Glossary" p.110). The terms included are ***bolded and italicized*** upon first use and where otherwise relevant. If you are reading this online, click a term to access its definition. The same goes for internal references to other sections. We have also included a list of resources for continued reading, as well as some guiding questions for honest and curious engagement with the material at hand (see "Recommended Resources" p.118). Onward!



Who Are The Jews?

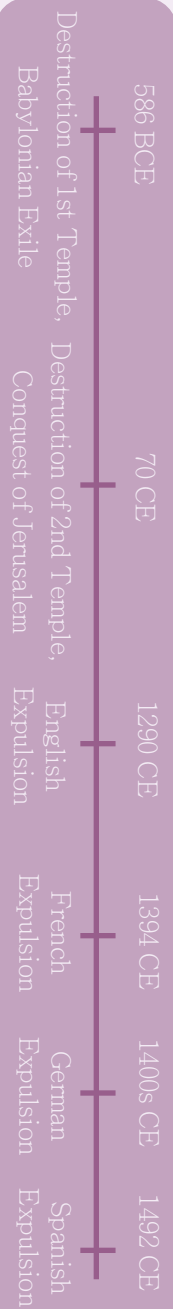
"Jews are a globally-dispersed, multi-ethnic culture who are linked by a shared history of Diaspora, and a religion (Judaism)."³ Jewishness is an identity that predates modern Western notions of “faith” and “ethnicity.”⁴ Jews are a people with a history, a religion, a language, and ties to a land.

Religion & History

Judaism refers to the religion of the Jewish people. Judaism is monotheistic and revolves around a covenant between the Jewish people and God that began with the Jewish patriarch, Abraham, who was called by God to “go forth to a land that I will show you (Canaan, or Israel/Palestine), and I will make of you a great nation” (Genesis 12:1-2). The primary sacred texts in Judaism are the Written and Oral Torah. The Written Torah refers to the Hebrew Bible, also known as the TaNaKh, and comprises the Five Books of Moses, Prophets, and Writings. Christians call the Hebrew Bible the “Old Testament.” The Oral Torah refers to the rabbinic texts and its succeeding commentaries, including the Mishna, Gemara, Talmud, and later rabbinic works of interpretation and law.

Most Jews can trace their ancestry back to the same group of people from the **biblical land of Israel**, roughly considered to be the land spanning from the Mediterranean Sea in the west to the Jordan River in the east. Beginning with the Babylonian invasion in 597 BCE, the Jews suffered a series of conquests, forced exiles, and wars that led to their present-day global dispersion, known as the **Diaspora**. Diaspora culture and community have served as a central part of Jewish identity, both historically and today. Many Jews view their Diasporic experience to be just as important to their Jewishness as other parts of Judaism; for some Jews, Israel plays a major role in that experience.

Jewish Diaspora



Many Jews in the Diaspora lack the ability to return to the countries where their families lived for centuries safely or meaningfully. Over the past two millennia, large numbers of Jews, overwhelmingly refugees from persecution, returned to the biblical land of Israel in waves, known as **aliyot**. Other Jews, mostly North Americans capable of remaining safely in their Diasporic locations, have chosen to remain in their adopted homelands. Today, 45.3% of the world's Jewish population lives in Israel, 38.8% lives in America, and the remaining 15.9% lives elsewhere, primarily in Europe.⁵



Jewish Pre-State Immigration

Diversity

Diaspora has resulted in there being a variety of Jewish ethnic groups across the globe, each with their own unique Jewish practices. These groups include **Mizrachi** Jews (of Middle Eastern and North African descent), **Ashkenazi** Jews (of European descent), **Sephardi** Jews (of Spanish and Portuguese descent), the Cochin Jews of India, Beta Israel of Ethiopia, the Igbo Jews of Nigeria, the Abayudaya Jews of Uganda, and the Kaifeng Jews of China. Many of these ethnic groups can clearly trace their lineage back to expulsions from the land of Israel in 586 BCE and 70 CE, while some identify as having descended from the lost tribes of Israel, ten of the **Twelve Tribes of Israel** said to have been exiled from northern Israel after its conquest in 722 BCE by the Assyrian empire. In addition, Judaism is a **proselytic religion**, meaning that someone who was not born Jewish can convert to Judaism through a process involving education and ritual. This aspect of Judaism has bolstered the diversity of the Jewish people over time and space.



Jewish Women of Color, U.S., 2019



Kaifeng family, Kaifeng, c. 1902



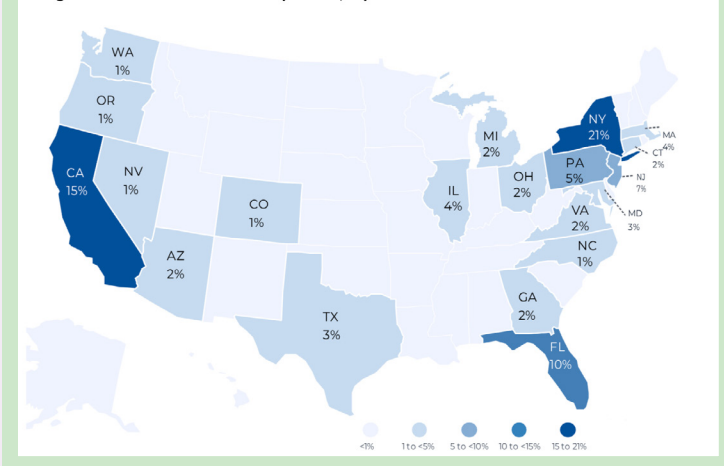
Yemni Jewish protest, Sanaa, 2009

There is also significant religious diversity within Judaism. Some contemporary denominations include **Orthodox Judaism** (a denomination with many sub-movements, spanning from Modern Orthodoxy to Ultra-Orthodoxy but is largely the Jewish denomination most fundamentalist in its theology and practice), **Conservative or Masorti Judaism** (conserves essential elements of Orthodoxy but allows for modernization), **Reform Judaism** (stresses Jewish values over ritual observance), **Reconstructionist Judaism** (rooted in the idea of Judaism as a civilization), and **Renewal Judaism** (a transdenominational incorporation of music and mindfulness), among others. Some Jews aren't religious at all, but rather consider themselves **culturally Jewish**. For these Jews, Judaism's literary, artistic, culinary, philosophical, and even scientific achievements are the focus of their identity, rather than any specifically spiritual or scriptural components.

Jews in America

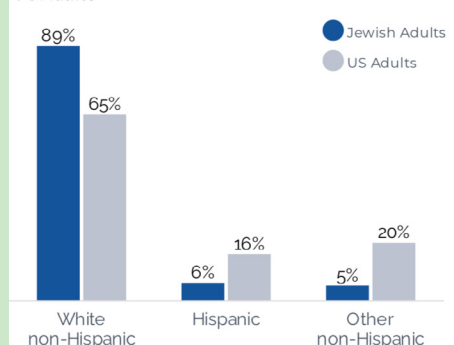
There are about 7.6 million Jews in the U.S., accounting for 2.4% of the nation's population.⁶ The majority of American Jews are Ashkenazi, largely due to waves of European emigration fleeing antisemitic regimes in the 19th and 20th centuries.⁷ Roughly 11% of American Jews today identify as **Jews of Color**,⁸ a group too often erased from conversations about American Judaism. There are also significant and well-established Sephardi, Mizrahi, and other ethnic Jewish communities in America. Jews live in every state in the country, but over 50% of the American Jewish population lives in New York, California, and Florida.⁹

Fig. 4: Pct. Within Total Jewish Population, Top 20 States



Graphs from Brandeis Jewish Population Estimates, 2020

Fig. 17: Pct. Race and Ethnicity, Jewish Adults and US Adults



Note: "Other non-Hispanic" includes all other racial groups (Black, Asian, Pacific Islander, etc.) as well as those who identify with multiple groups and those who identify with no group.

What is Antisemitism?



Definitions... or not

If defining the Jewish people is so tricky, how can we identify antisemitism accurately? The jury is still out on this one. As perceptions of Jews have evolved, so has hatred of them. Many institutions and intellectuals have proposed differing definitions of antisemitism – such as the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, whose definition was adopted by the U.S. Department of State,¹⁰ and the Jerusalem Declaration¹¹ – each with their own pros and cons. If you're looking for a neatly packaged definition of antisemitism, you won't find one here. Rather, we will approach defining antisemitism by unpacking its various dimensions through description and examples, in order to paint a nuanced image of what Jewish oppression and discrimination look like.



The word “antisemitism”

“Antisemitism” is a relatively new term, but hatred of Jewish people has existed for much longer. Prior to the late 1800s, the term “*Judenhass*,” translating to “Jew-hatred” in German, was used to describe what we consider antisemitism today. In 1879, a German intellectual named Wilhelm Marr coined the word “antisemite” to describe Jew-hatred in more “scientific” terms, hoping to enable intellectuals to sound more authoritative and sophisticated when asserting their hatred of Jews. Marr and many of his peers proudly proclaimed themselves antisemites, and even founded the Antisemites’ League, an organization that promoted Jew-hatred.

“Semite” is a confusing (and racist) term because it has been used to reference both **Arabs** of any religion and Jews from anywhere. The term was invented by German Orientalists in the 18th century as a tool to describe speakers of “Semitic” languages: **Hebrew**, Arabic, Syriac, and neighboring dialects. It has largely been discredited as a term that holds little scientific or sociological significance. Antisemitism refers only to the hatred of/discrimination against Jewish people, not others under the “Semite” umbrella.

Religious Antisemitism

Religious antisemitism refers to the hatred of Jews based on allegations that Judaism as a religion is inherently subversive, sacrilegious, or suspicious. Historically, religious antisemitism has often appeared in the form of state-sanctioned violence, such as legal restrictions on religious practices, government-led expulsions, or organized raids and massacres in Jewish communities known as **pogroms**. Religious antisemitism is largely responsible for the historic statelessness and/or second-class citizenship of the Jewish people.

Historical Examples

One of the most well-known examples of religious antisemitism is the charge of deicide, (the murder of a god) by Christian groups. First officially used by John Chrysostom in the 4th century and purportedly stemming from the Christian Bible, the charge of Jewish deicide claims that Jews are collectively responsible for murdering Jesus. This claim is false, and has been disproven by historians as well as formally disavowed by the Catholic Church in 1964.¹²

Another prominent trope of religious antisemitism is the Blood Libel, a myth that Jews kill non-Jewish children in order to use their blood in religious rituals. The charge of the Blood Libel was first used in 12th-century England, when a boy was found dead and Thomas of Monmouth, a Christian monk, accused local Jews of torturing him to caricature Jesus' crucifixion. The Blood Libel was used throughout the following centuries as justification for killing and torturing Jews across Europe. Later, Nazi propaganda campaigns during the **Holocaust** also employed charges of the Blood Libel. To clarify: Jews do not kill babies for their blood for use in religious ceremonies, or otherwise.



Jews punished for deicide, 1500s



Woodcut of Blood Libel, 1492

Religious antisemitism was also a major component of the 15th-century Spanish Inquisition. During this period, Judaism was considered a dangerous form of heresy, and Spanish Jews were forced to convert to Catholicism

under the threat of death or torture. Beginning in 1478, the ruling Catholic monarchs burned several thousand of these converted Jews, or *conversos*, suspected of secretly practicing Judaism. In 1492, the first inquisitor general expelled the 160,000 remaining Spanish Jews for refusing conversion.

An additionally significant example of religious antisemitism took shape across the Muslim world from the 8th century to as late as the 1800s, when Jews (and other non-Muslim minorities) were designated as second-class citizens, or *dhimmi*. *Dhimmi* communities were required to live in designated areas, pay additional taxes, wear identifying clothing, and adhere to social and professional restrictions.

Contemporary Examples



Still from "The Passion of Christ"

The 2004 movie, *The Passion of Christ*, co-written and directed by Mel Gibson, and portraying the false charge that Jews killed Jesus, repopularized the myth of deicide. The movie shifts responsibility for the torture and death of Jesus from the Romans to the Jewish community (Gibson originally included a scene of the "blood curse" of Matthew 27:25, in which the Jewish high priest damns the Jewish people because of the crucifixion, and ultimately removed it from the movie about three weeks before its release due to overwhelming charges of antisemitism).¹³ As of 2020, *The Passion of Christ* was the highest-grossing R-rated film ever made.¹⁴

The Blood Libel myth still circulates today. Former Jordanian Minister of Administrative Development Sheik Bassam Ammouh wrote in a 2014 sermon, "When the Jews were in the diaspora, they would murder children in England, in Europe, and in America. They would slaughter them and use their blood to make their matzos."¹⁵ John Earnest, perpetrator of the 2019 shooting at Chabad of Poway, CA, wrote in his manifesto, "You are not forgotten Simon of Trent, the horror that you and countless children have endured at the hands of Jews will never be forgiven." This statement refers to the 15th-century Blood Libel allegations against Jews for the supposed murder of Simon of Trent.¹⁶



Child protestors from Westboro Baptist Church, 2017

Political/Economic Antisemitism

JEW & MONEY:

Political/economic antisemitism is the hatred of Jews based on allegations of Jewish economic and political manipulation. Political/economic antisemitism accuses Jews of conspiracy and portrays them as a destabilizing force in civil society, claiming that they create social or financial problems for their own benefit. This form of antisemitism plays upon stereotypes of Jews as greedy, plotting, financially dishonest, and stingy. It is important to note that the idea that Jews control the world's wealth, or that all Jews are wealthy, is false. According to a study done in 2015 by nonpartisan wealth research firm New World Wealth, only 1.7% of the 13.1 million millionaires in the world are Jewish, and the vast majority of high income people in the U.S. are non-Jews.¹⁷

DUAL LOYALTY:

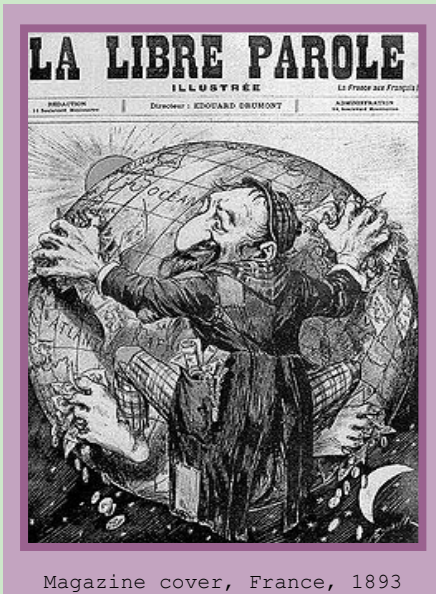
Western political/economic antisemitism was largely formed during the rise of **nationalism**, specifically **secular** nationalism, in the 18th and 19th centuries, during which European national consciousness became explicitly non-religious. This socio-political force shifted the characterization of Jewish otherness: the problem with Jews was no longer that they weren't truly Christian, but rather that they weren't truly French, German, etc.. Jews went from being accused of heresy to being accused of betraying their home states in the interest of their fellow Jews (**dual loyalty**). This line of thought meant that Jews could not be trusted to hold political power, engage with civil society, or be full citizens of the countries they inhabited.

Historical Examples

One famous historical example of political/economic antisemitism is the trial of Alfred Dreyfus, commonly known as the "Dreyfus Affair." In 1894, Dreyfus, a high-ranking French artillery officer of Jewish descent, was sentenced to life imprisonment for allegedly betraying the French government to aid Germany. In 1896, investigators uncovered evidence that another French army major was the real culprit of treason, but a group of elite military officials suppressed the information. Dreyfus was not acquitted until 1906. Media coverage of the trial was extensive, particularly

among “anti-Dreyfusards,” and employed tropes of Jewish sabotage, disloyalty, and warmongering.¹⁸ The widely-circulated coverage of the trial laid bare French an-

tisemitism, and showed many French and European Jews that they would be seen as “other,” no matter how **assimilated** and powerful they might become.



Magazine cover, France, 1893

Automobile magnate and notorious antisemite, Henry Ford, also powerfully perpetuated political/economic antisemitism, as exemplified in his 1920s propaganda publication, *The Dearborn Independent*, and his distribution of *The Protocols* (see "Conspiracy Theory" p.34), Ford once wrote that there was a “Jewish plan to control the world, not by territorial acquisition, not by military aggression, not by governmental subjugation, but by control of the machinery of commerce and exchange.”¹⁹

Contemporary Examples

My Awakening, the 1998 autobiography of David Duke, an American **neo-Nazi** and former member of the Louisiana House of Representatives, is a more recent work rife with political/economic antisemitism. Duke writes, “[Jews] thoroughly dominate the news and entertainment media in almost every civilized nation; they control the international markets and stock exchanges; and no government can resist doing their bidding on any issue of importance.”²⁰

Political/economic antisemitism can also be seen in the storm of **conspiracy theories** that surround billionaire philanthropist George Soros. Soros is a Hungarian Jew who hid during the Holocaust and moved to America following WWII. Soros went on to become an extremely wealthy businessman and is philanthropically supportive of liberal causes like higher education, the advancement of democracy around the world, and racial and criminal justice.

Soros was targeted extensively by Hungarian state-sponsored propaganda campaigns led by far-right former Prime Minister Viktor Orbán.



Screenshot from National Republican Congressional Committee advertisement, 2018

These campaigns falsely cast Soros as the mastermind behind the influx of Muslim immigrants into Hungary – seen as threats to the ethnic “purity” of the nation – playing upon tropes of warmongering and Jewish conspiracy. The campaign included vast public distribution of posters that stated, “Don’t let George Soros have the last laugh!” over photographs of Soros laughing, and government-disseminated surveys asking every Hungarian citizen to answer questions regarding their opposition to Soros’s “evil” policies. American right-wing movements also fixated on Soros. The National Republican Congressional Committee released a TV ad in 2018 calling Soros a “connoisseur of chaos,” and a “funder of the left”²¹ (see above image). Far-right extremists have also deemed Soros responsible for hiring counter-protesters at Trump rallies, catalyzing Colin Kaepernick's anti-racist activism, and more broadly manipulating the economy to further his left-leaning agenda and enrich himself. These allegations align with antisemitism's role in white nationalist ideology (see "White Nationalism" p.39).

Heard the word "globalist" recently? Globalist has become a codeword among far-right nationalists to refer to Jews and their supposed international political and economic manipulation.

Another recent case of political/economic antisemitism took place in 2012, when Jeremy Corbyn, who became leader of the British Labour Party in 2014, commented his support of an antisemitic mural in London. The mural, painted by street artist

Mear One, pictured several bankers with stereotypically “Jewish” appearances playing a game of Monopoly resting upon the backs of non-white laborers. On Facebook, Corbyn commented his disappointment in the mural’s scheduled removal on account of its antisemitic tone. Corbyn later apologized for his comment;²² however, it is worth noting that the period of his leadership was characterized by a surge of antisemitism within the Labour Party. Allegations of party antisemitism led to an official investigation in 2019, during which hundreds of incidents of antisemitism from members and leaders were reported, and over 350 members of the party either resigned, were expelled, or received formal warning.²³



Tweets from conservative U.S. pundit, 2020

Racialized Antisemitism

Racialized antisemitism is the hatred of Jews based on the belief that Jews are racially inferior. Racialized antisemitism often employs stereotypes of “Jewish appearance” (think: “Jew nose”), caricaturing Jewish identity for the purpose of discrimination. This form of antisemitism portrays Jews as a threat to “superior” races and to the genetic purity of society. An important aspect of racialized antisemitism is that it theorizes Jewish inferiority as inherent: Jews cannot convert, repent, or assimilate to become acceptable members of society, but must be entirely removed.

What is **RACE** ?

*According to the National Museum of African American History & Culture, race is a **social fabrication**, created to classify people on the arbitrary basis of skin color and other physical features. Although race has no genetic or scientific basis, the concept of race is important and consequential. Societies use race to **establish, justify, and perpetuate systems of power, privilege, disenfranchisement, and oppression.**²⁴*

Racialized antisemitism is also indifferent to actual racial diversity among Jews, erasing and delegitimizing the lived experiences of the many Jews who do not fit the stereotypical idea of how Jews look (see "Diversity" p.18). In the U.S., the racial category of Jews typically refers to Ashkenazi Jews, who often “pass” as white, whereas Jews of Color and non-Ashkenazi Jews are racialized primarily in accordance with their skin color. (For more on American Jewish racialization, whiteness, and how it all ties into antisemitism, see “White Nationalism.” p.39).

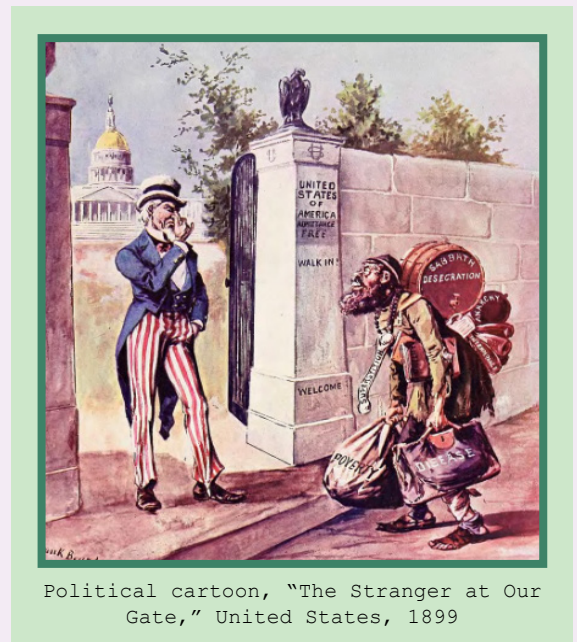


Antisemitic propaganda, Germany, c. 1933

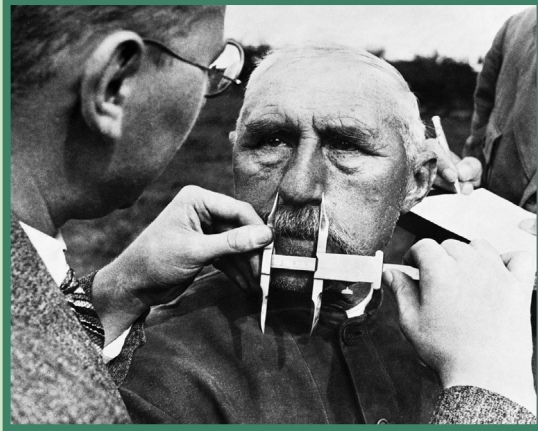
Historical Examples

We can look again to the Spanish Inquisition for an example of racialized antisemitism. In 1547, the statute of *limpieza de sangre*, or “purity of blood,” was imposed, denying individuals with any Jewish blood certain social and political privileges. This law did not apply to Jews on account of their religious practice, as did the earlier burnings and expulsions of Jews. Instead, it rendered Jews a racial category distinct from Spanish Christians, such that even *conversos* (converts), no matter how true to their Christianity, were held accountable for their Jewishness.

Prior to WWII, American Jews, including Ashkenazi Jews, were not considered white. Rather, **whiteness** was applied exclusively to people of Nordic, Germanic, and Anglo-Saxon descent (sometimes referred to as “Aryans”). This attitude crystallized during the American **eugenics** movement in the late-19th and early-20th centuries, which strove to improve the “genetic quality” of the U.S. population through practices like forced sterilization and contraception campaigns. Jews, along with other minority groups such as Black people, disabled people, and Irish, Italian, and other “undesirable” immigrants, became widely seen as a threat to mainstream whiteness. During this period, previously unseen levels of racialized discrimination against Jews swept across America. Madison Grant’s 1916 pseudo-scientific book on racial preservation, *The Passing of the Great Race*, exemplified the racialized antisemitism of the American eugenics movement. Grant writes, “The cross between any of the three European races and a Jew is a Jew.”²⁵



These racialized antisemitic ideas became institutionalized in several forms. The U.S. Immigration Act of 1924 sharply restricted immigration from countries that, until that point, had represented the largest departure points for Jews coming to America. According to the U.S. Department of State Office of the Historian, this act aimed to “preserve the ideal of U.S. homogeneity.”²⁶ Housing covenants, otherwise known as deed restrictions, limited the sale of homes to Jews in addition to other minorities. For example, multiple housing covenants throughout Seattle asserted that land “shall not be sold, conveyed, rented, or leased, in whole or in part, to any



Nazi measuring Jew's nose, Germany, 1941

Hebrew or any person of the Malay, Ethiopian or any other [Black person] or any Asiatic race.”²⁷

Much of the antisemitism that formed the core of Nazi ideology in the 1930s and 1940s was based on America's eugenics movement. Nazis sought to scientifically define Jews as an inferior race in order to justify their antisemitic practices, and used American eugenic pseudo-science to determine Jewish

“physical characteristics.” In fact, Adolf Hitler referred to Grant's *The Passing of the Great Race* as his own personal “Bible.”²⁸

Contemporary Examples

While the eugenics movement no longer dominates American society, many of its racialized antisemitic ideas still exist today. The 2017 Unite The Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia is an example of this reality. At the rally, far-right groups marched in promotion of **white supremacy** and neo-Nazism. In addition to carrying Confederate flags, many protesters also carried flags with Nazi and neo-Nazi symbols as they chanted, “Jews will not replace us!” This chant refers specifically to the conspiracy of racialized replacement in the United States, which purports that white Americans are being replaced by minorities as the dominant racial and cultural force.

In addition, in 2021, Wilshire Boulevard Temple in Los Angeles, CA was graffitied with swastikas and the phrase, “I hate your race.”²⁹ Examples like these abound.



“Unite the Right” protesters, Virginia, 2017



Vandalized synogogue, Los Angeles, 2021

Social Antisemitism



Swimming club, Maryland, c. 1950

Social antisemitism is the social exclusion of Jews rooted in abstract racialized, religious, and political antisemitic notions of inferiority, undesirability, and otherness. In addition to wholesale exclusion, social antisemitism can also involve conditional acceptance – the inclusion of Jews only once they conform to standards that shroud their Jewishness – which is, in itself, antisemitic (see “The Good Jew, Bad Jew Phenomenon” p.72).

Social antisemitism is difficult to track, because it takes place in private institutions and among informal social groups, away from the accountability of legal systems and official policies. Social antisemitism is subtle, usually rooted in a deep-seated dislike for Jews and unspoken cultural traditions of exclusion.

Historical Examples

The late-19th- to early-20th-century rise in racialized antisemitism normalized social antisemitism within American society, such as among elite colleges, Greek life, and social clubs. In the 1920s, many private American universities placed quotas on Jewish and other minority students. U.S. institutions were not alone in this practice. Private schools in Canada, Hungary, Russia, and Romania also restricted Jewish admission, several such policies remaining in effect until the 1960s, including in the United States.³⁰ Forbidding Jews from enrolling in top-tier universities not only limited their opportunities for education and employment, but also prevented them from participating in the socialization integral to educated society that much of the American elite received in college.

Greek life, or fraternity and sorority culture, has historically been a major venue for social antisemitism within the United States. The Jewish fraternities and sororities you may know of today were actually created in direct response to social antisemitism on college campuses during the early-19th and late-20th



Jewish Greek life gathering, Minnesota, 1949



Washington, c. 1920-30

centuries, when Jewish women were barred from boarding houses and Jewish men were prohibited from joining social clubs and fraternities. Greek life antisemitism was also reflected at the institutional level. Several Jewish sororities petitioned for recognition by the National Panhellenic Council, the overseeing institution that governs all U.S. Greek life, every year between 1917 and 1946, and were not admitted until 1947.³¹ This is also the context out of which Hillel centers on campus were created (see "Hillel" p.78).

Private social clubs, such as “gentlemen’s clubs,” golf clubs, and country clubs have similarly exemplified social antisemitism throughout U.S. history. These clubs are dues-paying membership organizations that provide recreational benefits to their members. Social clubs in the U.S. have historically forbidden Jews, along with other minorities, from acquiring membership. In 1969, the Anti-Defamation League reported discrimination against Jews in 781 clubs in the U.S., two-thirds of the number of social clubs at the time.³² Similar to the case of Greek life, this discrimination led to the creation of several Jewish golf and country clubs, as well as many Jewish Community Centers (JCCs), across the United States.

Institutionalized forms of social discrimination against Jews decreased following WWII, as Jews started accessing societal privileges inaccessible to other marginalized groups (see “How Most Jews ‘Became White’” p.40). While private organizations have removed their codified restrictions on Jewish membership, some Jews are still unwelcome in certain segments of civil society, particularly those that have had antisemitic policies in the past.

Personal story

Hannah G.

I grew up in New Orleans, Louisiana, where debutante balls are a major part of the local social scene. “Debutante” refers to a young woman of upper-class background when she reaches maturity (between 16 and 18 years old) and is ready to formally make her “debut” into society, usually in the form of a debutante ball. Debutante balls are high-end, invite-only parties at expensive venues with black-tie dress codes that originated as a way for women to be displayed for marriage among aristocratic families. In order to become a debutante today, girls must be sponsored by an established committee within high society, a historically non-Jewish community. While Jews have technically been allowed into New Orleans social clubs since the late-20th century, in reality, they rarely are. I lived in New Orleans my entire life, and so did my mother’s family. Very rarely do we hear of Jewish debutantes, or Jews being invited to debutante balls. Growing up, the reason for this was always obvious, and always assumed: we are Jews, and that part of New Orleans society is not for people like us.

How Does Antisemitism Work?

So far...

We've pointed out some of the key motivations for antisemitism and the ways antisemitism can manifest. Now, it's time to break down some of the ways that antisemitism functions. Understanding the mechanisms that animate and sustain antisemitism is crucial to dismantling them. In this section, we'll focus on the following four ways in which antisemitism works.

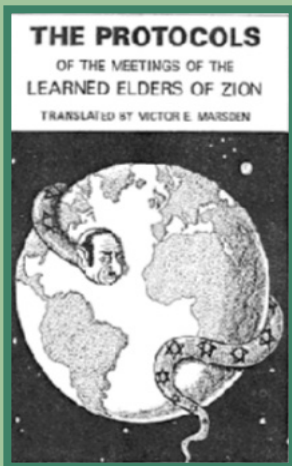
- 1 Conspiracy Theory
Jews as behind-the-scenes bad guys.
- 2 Interstitiality
Jews as buffers between the elite and the marginalized.
- 3 Cyclicity
Jewish oppression's tendency to follow Jewish prosperity.
- 4 White Nationalism
Jews as a linchpin in American white nationalist ideology.

Conspiracy Theory

Conspiracy theories about Jews are one of the most common expressions of antisemitism. Drawing together the previously mentioned themes of antisemitism (religion, politics/economics, race, and society), conspiracy theories work to create a cohesive narrative of Jewish villainy. Conspiracy theories lend themselves to all hate-based ideologies, and are often used to justify violence against marginalized communities. The particular trope of Jews as behind-the-scenes evil-doers who are responsible for the ills of civilization makes conspiracy theories particularly prominent mechanisms of antisemitism.

One of the most influential antisemitic conspiracies in modern history is the 1903 publication, *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*. The forged text details a meeting of Jewish leaders planning to sabotage the world by taking over the media and dismantling Christian society through liberal and bourgeois ideas. *The Protocols* were originally released by officers of Russia's Czarist secret police in an attempt to weaken the force of communist revolutionaries, a significant portion of whom were Jewish. After their publication in 1903, *The Protocols* were distributed around the world and translated into numerous languages. By 1917, *The Protocols* were a bestseller in Europe and the U.S., where they were re-written and widely circulated by American business magnate Henry Ford. European colonialists also exported *The Protocols* to much of the Middle East and North Africa in an attempt to weaken relationships between Jews and their local communities in order to facilitate colonization. *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* are the most widely known source of the myth of Jewish plans for world domination, and their ideologies can be identified clearly in American white supremacist and neo-Nazi movements today.

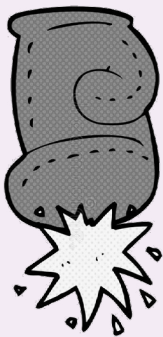
A few versions of international copies of "The Protocols of Elders of Zion," early-20th century



Interstitiality

Looking closely at these mechanisms of antisemitism, a confusing dynamic emerges: Jews are somehow demonized and belittled at the same time that they are profiled as behind-the-scenes elites who possess unthinkable power over economic and political affairs. This is where the idea of interstitiality comes in. Interstitiality describes how Jews are positioned in the middle ground between the elite and the marginalized, receiving hatred from both sides.

Interstice: a space that intervenes between things, particularly between closely spaced things³³



Jews are “punched down” at by people who view them as inferior or “other,” excluding them from full assimilation or acceptance, and subjecting them to acts of hatred.

People perpetuating antisemitic violence and beliefs consider themselves “punching up” at the beneficiaries of an unjust system. If Jews have a perceived level of power above their own, and this power has caused all of society’s ills, then antisemitic violence against them is justified.



These “punches” leave Jews *stuck between elites and marginalized groups within systems of injustice*. As oppressed groups falsely cast Jews as the source of society’s ills, they misdirect their blame away from the larger systems responsible for their marginalization. At the same time, interstitiality leaves the Jewish community with a lack of allies. Jews are kept from fully assimilating among the elite, while also prevented from achieving meaningful solidarity with other oppressed groups.

The Middleman: *The perception of Jewish cooperation with oppressors in exchange for security makes them the face of the oppressor and a scapegoat for societal ills.*

The Buffer: *The function of Jews as punching bags between the oppressor and the oppressed helps power imbalances stay in place.*

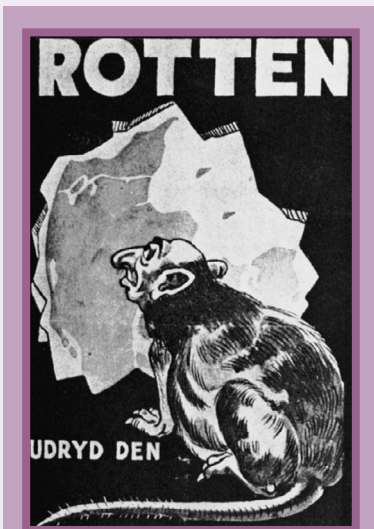
Jews have historically been forced into middleman roles, exchanging their agency and cooperating with oppressive regimes or systems for temporary security and privilege. A classic example of histori-

cal Jewish interstitiality is the medieval Court Jew. During the Middle Ages, Jews were not legally permitted to hold most jobs. However, European nobility and royalty employed Jewish bankers to provide key economic services often considered “immoral” or “dirty” in Christian society – such as credit-mediating, trade-networking, handling of finances, purchasing munitions – in exchange for special privileges. The price these Jews paid for economic stability was to become the face of their employers’ dealings, and thus convenient **scapegoats** in times of economic and political unrest. This position also led to high levels of literacy and numeracy in medieval Jewish society, bolstering the trope of the Jew as suspiciously informed and thus a political insider and economic saboteur (see “Political/Economic Antisemitism” p.24).



“Greedy Jew,” Britain, 1840

In America today, interstitiality primarily applies to “white-passing Jews,” those who are considered white in the contemporary American racial landscape, thus receiving enough socio-economic privileges to exist in a middleman role (see “How Most Jews ‘Became White’” p.40). Jews of Color (and some non-Ashkenazi Jews) are often categorized based on their skin color, rather than their Jewishness and, as a result, do not fall easily into the interstitial equation of being both “punched up” and “punched down” at.



“Jewish Vermin,” Nazi Germany

Nevertheless, interstitiality tends to render Jewish oppression invisible, particularly in contemporary left-wing spaces. As Jewish writer and activist April Rosenblum states, “because most movements for [social justice] perceive oppression through a material analysis of who lacks resources and opportunities... The Left mistakenly writes current-day Jewish oppression off as fake or minor because it’s not based on poverty, skin color, or colonized status.”³⁴

Cyclicity

Antisemitism has historically operated cyclically. Though there is debate over whether antisemitism is inherently cyclical, we think it's worth noting that periods of Jewish acceptance have frequently been followed by periods of acute antisemitism across space and time, usually because leaders turn to Jews as scapegoats for the population's hatred in times of economic, political, and societal upheaval. This vicious cycle has led to a constant sense of fear and insecurity among many Jewish communities, regardless of how assimilated they are, or how much power they have in their society.



The Holocaust is a crucial example of the cyclical nature of antisemitism. In the early-20th century, the Jews of Germany were some of the most prosperous, well-assimilated Jews in history. Jewish society in Berlin throughout the late 1800s and early 1900s was the cultural center of Diaspora Jewry, and is often compared to the current-day Jewish hub in New York City. Jews ran successful businesses, held political office, and were accepted into elite social groups. Following Germany's global humiliation after losing WWI, however, German

leaders began to propagate the antisemitic myth that Germany had not surrendered out of military necessity, but because Jews in power had secretly betrayed the nation. The Nazi Party capitalized on this growing antisemitism throughout the 1930s, calling for boycotts of Jewish businesses, dismissing Jews from civil service, and implementing **The Nuremberg Laws**, which excluded Jews from German citizenship and prohibited them from marrying "pure" Germans. The result was an immense, state-orchestrated wave of anti-Jewish violence (including **Kristallnacht**, or "Night of the Broken Glass") across Germany. What followed were **ghettos**, concentration camps, death marches, and gas chambers that killed over 6 million Jews. It was the visibility of German Jewish prosperity itself that the Nazi propaganda machine used to stoke the flames of antisemitism,



Frankfurt am Main synagogue being burned during Kristallnacht, Frankfurt, 1938

and fostering resentment for Jewish success was critical in turning the German people against their Jewish neighbors so rapidly.

*"Because modern antisemitic ideology traffics in fantasies of invisible power, it thrives **precisely when its target would seem to be least vulnerable.**"*

Scholar Eric Ward, "Skin in the Game"³⁵

The legacy of the Holocaust persists in global Jewish consciousness today. The cyclical dynamic – in which Jewish success causes antisemitism to flare up – often leads Jews to expect persecution to directly follow periods of prosperity and safety. Even for those contemporary American Jews who have managed to reach positions of privilege in society, the flourishing of the German Jewish community prior to the Holocaust is proof that assimilation and success will not protect them. Hence, many American Jews are hyper-vigilant about antisemitism whenever it seems to appear. Considering America's antisemitic past and present, these concerns are not unfounded. In 1939, America refused to accept 900 Jewish refugees who fled from Europe, consequently sending them back to Germany to perish in the Nazi death camps. In 2017, former president Donald Trump publicly characterized neo-Nazi rioters as "fine people."³⁶ American Jews consider the Holocaust a lesson on the cyclical nature of antisemitism, and apply it to their lives today.



Jewish children, prewar Germany



Jewish children, Auschwitz, 1945

White Nationalism

The conversation about Judaism and white nationalism can be confusing because most Jews in the U.S. present as white and benefit from white privilege. This is due to the fact that American Jews are primarily of Eastern European descent. You might be wondering, how can Jews benefit from whiteness, but still suffer under white supremacy? Before we discuss how antisemitism functions vis-à-vis white nationalism, let's take a moment to unpack the relationship between Judaism and whiteness.

What “Whiteness” Means

As explained by the National Museum of African American History and Culture³⁷

It is important to acknowledge that **race** is a social fabrication, created to classify people on the arbitrary basis of skin color and other physical features. Although race has no genetic or scientific basis, the concept of race is important and consequential. Societies use race to establish and justify systems of power, privilege, disenfranchisement, and oppression.

Whiteness and white racialized identity refer to the way that white people, their customs, culture, and beliefs operate as the standard to which all other groups are compared. Whiteness is also at the core of understanding race in America. Whiteness and the normalization of white racial identity throughout America's history have created a culture where nonwhite persons are seen as inferior or abnormal. This white-dominant culture also operates as a social mechanism that grants advantages to white people, since they can navigate society both by feeling normal and by being viewed as normal. That is to say, white persons rarely have to think about their racial identity, whereas nonwhite persons must always consider theirs.

Since white people in America hold most of the nation's political, institutional, and economic power, they receive advantages that nonwhite groups do not. These benefits and advantages, of varying degrees, are known as white privilege. In “[White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack](#),” scholar Peggy McIntosh writes, “White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, code books, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks.”



Non-White Jews

Jewish whiteness and white privilege do not apply to Jews of Color, who are primarily categorized based on their skin color rather than their Jewishness. As Jews for Racial and Economic Justice writes, “Like all other People of Color, Jews of Color are the targets of racism (even within the Jewish community³⁸) and white supremacy, while as Jews they are also targeted by antisemitism.”³⁹ This process leaves Jews of Color squeezed by bigotry on all sides.



Manishtana Rison, NYC, 2012

Jewish-Presenting White Jews

Whiteness is not as uniformly attributed to Jews who stand out as “other” due to their unique physical appearance and dress, even if they are racially white. This includes Hasidic men with *payot* (sidelocks), Orthodox women with *tichel* (headscarves), Jews who wear *kippot/yarmulkes* (traditional head-coverings), and Jews who follow religious dietary laws (“keep Kosher”). Usually, the more conspicuously Jewish a person is, the less privileges they have in their “invisible knapsacks.”

How Most Jews "Became White"

Ashkenazi Jews’ association with whiteness in America is a social phenomenon that began in the mid-20th century. Prior to WWII, Jews, including Ashkenazi Jews, were not widely considered white (See “Racialized Antisemitism” p.27). Following the war, however, the horrors of the Holocaust shed a morbid light on eugenics, and anti-Nazi fervor took over the United States. As a result, the racialization of Jews became taboo. The American government began to fear charges of Nazism and, in the 1940s, Jews entering the U.S. stopped being marked “Hebrew” as their race on immigration forms and began being marked “white.” To avoid coming to terms with its own history of antisemitism, mainstream America welcomed Jews

into whiteness, and American institutions like higher education and social clubs began to accept more Jews into their ranks.

Many white Ashkenazi Jews seized this opportunity to be accepted among the privileged and powerful in U.S. society, but not without paying a price. After WWII, white Ashkenazi Jews were afforded what scholars call "**conditional whiteness**," meaning that they were granted the benefits of whiteness as long as they sufficiently hid their Jewishness and "passed" as white. It is true that white Ashkenazi Jews do benefit from white privilege in American society. However, as scholar of right-wing extremist thought and the preservation of U.S. democracy Eric Ward states, "Privilege... is not the same as power. Privilege can be revoked."⁴⁰ To a white nationalist, *a Jew's ability to be perceived as white is precisely what makes them insidious*, for it enables them to pretend to be among the elite and promote their liberal agenda while diluting the "pure" white society.

White Nationalism & Antisemitism

Recognizing the relationship between antisemitism and other hate-based ideologies is a critical step in understanding the workings of antisemitism. Ward describes antisemitism as "the fuel that white nationalist ideology uses to power its anti-Black racism, its contempt for other people of color, and its xenophobia — as well as the misogyny and other forms of hatred it holds dear."⁴¹

White Supremacy vs. White Nationalism

White supremacy is the broad ideology which perceives white people ("white" being used here to exclude Jews) as a superior race that should dominate the economic, political, and social spheres of society.

*White nationalism is the political movement that gained traction in the late 1960s among Americans who interpreted the **Civil Rights movement** as a threat to white supremacy. In what follows, we're talking specifically about white nationalism.*

Ward explains that white nationalism is rooted in the myth of Jewish puppeteers and saboteurs who manipulate the government and the economy. White nationalism crystalized as an ideology during the Civil Rights movement in the 1950s and 60s. During this period, white nationalists were flabbergasted by the success of Black people in advancing their rights. In white nationalists' eyes, the only explanation for the success of minorities, who they viewed as intellectually and physically inferior, in gaining social equality had to have been a secret, powerful consortium of villains who sought to destroy the white supremacist social order: the Jews. Hence, white nationalists view Jews as having destabilized white Christian society by promoting the agendas of other marginalized groups who could not have triumphed over whiteness on their own.

*“The Jew was created to **destroy the white Christian nations...** Do you think the whites of this country demanded the Civil Rights laws?... The white society in this country is being destroyed.”*

2018 Candidate for House of Representatives Russel Walker⁴²

Economic class plays an important role in the relationship between antisemitism and white nationalism in the United States. Most white nationalists are not part of the super-rich elite, but rather are poor or middle-class working white people. These groups of white nationalists “have a stake in traditional social privilege but resent the power of upper-class elites over them,”⁴³ a position that makes assimilated Jews – who they see as an inferior race pretending to be white as they steal the rightful wealth of “true” white America – the ideal scapegoat for their socio-economic woes.

*“Contemporary antisemitism, then, does not just enable racism, it also is racism, for in the white nationalist imaginary Jews are a race – the race – that presents **an existential threat to whiteness.**”*

Scholar Eric Ward, “Skin in the Game”⁴⁴

The scapegoating of Jews for the decline of the white nationalist social order rose after Donald Trump’s election in 2016. Citing several sources, antisemitism researcher Ben Lorber writes that Trump’s stances

on immigration implied that he sought “to preserve the nation’s predominantly white identity,” thus embodying a “great replacement” rhetoric by which the whiteness of America was threatened by minority invaders.⁴⁵ Trump’s slogan, “Make America Great Again,” embodied this idea of a return to a white supremacist ideal.

*"White nationalists use the very fact that, over the twentieth century, some U.S. Jews entered visible positions in portions of the middle and upper classes, while some others enthusiastically embraced progressive causes, as proof of their **false and conspiratorial view of Jews as hidden puppeteers** both of economic and governmental power structures, and of progressive movements."*

Jewish Researcher Ben Lorber, "Taking Aim at Multiracial Democracy"⁴⁶

From August 2015 to July 2016, the ADL reported 2.6 million tweets that included antisemitic language.⁴⁷ From January 2017 to January 2018, they reported 4.2 million more.⁴⁸ Robert Bow-

ers, the perpetrator of the 2018 shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh posted on a right-wing online platform, "There is no #MAGA as long as there is a kike infestation."⁴⁹ Similarly, John Earnest, perpetrator of the 2019 shooting at Chabad of Poway, CA wrote in his manifesto, "Is it worth it for me to live a comfortable life at the cost of international Jewry sealing the doom of my race?"⁵⁰

Linked Liberation

The intersection of antisemitism and white nationalism in America highlights the importance of **intersectional justice** work. Since antisemitism fuels white nationalism, fighting antisemitism goes hand in hand with dismantling other systems of oppression in the United States. Combating anti-Black racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia, homophobia, and misogyny are all important parts of combating antisemitism, and vice-versa. In order to achieve collective liberation – freedom, justice, and safety for all – we must address the realities of antisemitism.



Should We Talk About Zionism & Israel?



Yes, and here's why.

It's pretty much impossible to meaningfully understand or accurately address antisemitism today without learning about Zionism and Israel, the state Zionism birthed. Both the Zionist movement and the establishment of the Jewish state of Israel were in large part responses to antisemitism. At the same time, misconstructions and assumptions about what Israel and Zionism have to do with Jews and Judaism play a huge role in contemporary antisemitism.



We know it's complicated...

The topics of Israel and Zionism are extremely fraught, and quite personal to many of us. We also know that Israel and Zionism are each complex, historically-rich phenomena in their own rights. We are primarily focusing upon Israel and Zionism as they pertain to understanding antisemitism. Our goal in this section is neither to give a comprehensive history of Israel and Zionism, nor to give any one narrative of Israel or Zionism a full "pass." Rather, we hope to shed light on Israel and Zionism in ways that will enable a deeper understanding of antisemitism.

What is Zionism?

Today, discourse surrounding Zionism often defines the term synonymously with current Israeli policy, rather than attending to its historical, religious, and political nuances. Before exploring how Zionism is understood and discussed today, it's worth looking back on the long and complex history and theory of Zionism. What we have included here is just the tip of the iceberg.

The Word “Zionism”

“Zion” is the name used in the Bible to refer to the hill in Jerusalem upon which the city of King David (a famous king of the Tribes of Israel) was built. Later, the term came to refer to the whole city of Jerusalem, and eventually to the entire **biblical land of Israel**. The term “Zionism” was coined in 1890 by Austrian journalist Nathan Birnbaum to refer to the goal of the Jewish return to their homeland in the biblical land of Israel. However, over time, Zionism has referred to a variety of ideologies that pertain to the notions of Jewish liberation, autonomy, and statehood.

Religious Roots

Zionism is built on millenia of spiritual, historical, and cultural yearning by Jews to return to the biblical land of Israel. The religious components of Zionism are responsible for many Zionists' specific desire to establish a Jewish state in this location, rather than anywhere else.

Many Jewish traditions and rituals are based in longing for Jerusalem and the land of Israel, both as physical locations and as metaphors for redemptive, messianic futures. These practices have remained central to Jewish practice throughout centuries of Diaspora. For example, the Torah instructs Jews to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem three times a year. Jewish practice also mandates prayer facing Jerusalem, invokes a return to Zion and Jerusalem in numerous daily prayers and major holidays, and many religious commandments must be performed in the biblical land of Israel.

Judaism as a religion includes the ancient history of the Jewish people in the biblical land of Israel. This land houses all of Judaism's sacred sites and archeological history, including the graves of the Jewish patriarchs and matriarchs and the Western Wall (also known as the Wailing Wall, or *Kotel*, in Hebrew), a remaining wall from the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem before it was destroyed by Rome in 70 CE. Today, these religio-historic motivations are an integral part of continued support for Zionism.

Psalm 137

1. By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat, sat and wept, as we thought of Zion.
2. There on the poplars we hung up our lyres,
3. for our captors asked us there for songs, our tormentors, for amusement: "Sing us one of the songs of Zion."
4. How can we sing a song of the Lord on alien soil?
5. If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither;
6. let my tongue stick to my palate if I cease to think of you, if I do not keep Jerusalem in memory even at my happiest hour.
7. Remember, O Lord against the Edomites the day of Jerusalem's fall; how they cried, "Strip her, strip her to her very foundations!"

- א. על נהרות בבל שם ישבנו גם בכינו בִּזְכְּרָנוּ אֶת צִיּוֹן.
- ב. על ערבים בתוכה תְּלִינוּ כְּנֹדֹתֵינוּ.
- ג. כִּי שָׁם שָׂאוּנוּ שׁוֹבֵינוּ דְּבָרֵי שִׁיר וְתוֹלְלֵינוּ שְׂמִיחָה שִׁירוּ לָנוּ מִשִּׁיר צִיּוֹן.
- ד. אֵיךְ יִשִּׁיר אֶת שִׁיר יְהוָה עַל אֲדָמַת נָכַר.
- ה. אִם אֲשַׁחֲךְ יְרוּשָׁלַם תִּשְׁכַּח יְמִינִי.
- ו. תִּדְבֶּק לְשׁוֹנֵי לֶחְמֵי אִם-לֹא אֲזַכְּרֶנּוּ אִם לֹא אֲעִלֶה אֶת יְרוּשָׁלַם עַל רֹאשׁ שְׂמִיחָתִי.
- ז. זָכֹר יְהוָה לְבִנְי אֲדוּם אֵת יוֹם יְרוּשָׁלַם הָאֲמֹדִים עָרוּ עָרוּ עַד הִסּוּד בָּהּ.

Isaiah 49:6

6. For He has said: "It is too little that you should be My servant In that I raise up the tribes of Jacob And restore the survivors of Israel: I will also make you a light of nations, that My salvation may reach the ends of the earth."

ו. וַיֹּאמֶר נְקַל מִדְּהִיּוֹתֶךָ לִי עֲבֹד לְהַקִּים אֶת שְׁבִטֵי יַעֲקֹב וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְהַשִּׁיב וּנְתִתֶיךָ לְאוֹר גּוֹיִם לְהַיּוֹת יְשׁוּעָתִי עַד קִצֵּה הָאָרֶץ.

Chronicles 22:10

10. He will build a House for My name; he shall be a son to Me and I to him a father, and I will establish his throne of kingship over Israel forever.

י. הוּא יִבְנֶה בַּיִת לְשְׁמִי וְהוּא יִהְיֶה לִי לְבֵן וְאֲנִי לוֹ לְאָב וְהַכִּינֹתִי כִּסֵּא מַלְכוּתוֹ, עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל עַד עוֹלָם.



Ideological Evolution



Early Zionist pioneers/settlers

The modern Zionist movement stemmed from millennia of Jewish longing for the biblical land of Israel and Jewish persecution. Before the modern movement began, **proto-Zionist** groups in the late-18th and early-19th centuries moved to Palestine hoping to rejuvenate Jewish life amid the challenges of modernity. Modern Zionism was largely born out of the rise of **nationalism** in late-19th century Europe. This period saw the development of European nation-states, countries established around a population with a shared ethnicity, language, and culture. As European Jews continued to face antisemitism, they began to consider whether or not they would ever be fully trusted citizens of their respective countries, and to debate whether a Jewish state was the only means to achieve Jewish safety and dignity. Over the course of the late-19th and early-20th centuries, Zionism evolved into a variety of ideologies striving to resolve the problem of Jewish physical, social, spiritual, economic, and political precariousness around the world. Before we get into the form of Zionism at the forefront of the foundation of the state of Israel we know today, let's take a moment to look at some of the other contenders that developed during this period (in roughly chronological order).

Zionisms, Plural

Socialist/Labor Zionism:

Founded by Nachman Syrkin in late-19th-century Russia, Socialist/Labor Zionism was based on the belief that relocating Russian Jewry to Palestine would enable them to thrive. Socialist/Labor Zionists were concerned with the character of the Jewish state, and desired to establish an agriculturist, morally-equitable Jewish society that extended rights and privileges to Arabs as well. This is the movement from which Israeli *kibbutzim*, small-scale socialist agricultural communities, emerged. Some of the most important pre-state Zionist leaders were Socialist/Labor Zionists, such as David Ben-Gurion (first Prime Minister of Israel) and Yitzhak Ben-Zvi (longest-serving Israeli President). Socialist/Labor Zionism formed the ideological base of Israel's Labor Party, historically one of the country's two main political parties.



Workers on an early kibbutz

Cultural Zionism:

Founded in the late-19th century by Asher Zvi Ginsberg, also known as Ahad Ha'am (Hebrew for "one of the people"), Cultural Zionism viewed the crisis of the Jewish people not as one of statehood but rather as one of culture and spirituality. For Ahad Ha'am, political solutions were of secondary importance to the reinvigoration of Jews' connection to Judaism. Unlike proponents of political forms of Zionism, Cultural Zionists did not feel the need to establish a state in Palestine. Rather, they sought to create a small, Jewish, Hebrew-speaking hub in the biblical land of Israel that would lead a spiritual renaissance of Jewish life worldwide, serving as the cultural center for Diaspora Jews.

Revisionist Zionism:

Founded by Vladimir (Z'ev) Jabotinsky in early-20th-century Russia, Revisionist Zionism advocated for the settlement of the entire biblical land of Israel, meaning all of present-day Israel, the West Bank, Gaza, and all or part of Jordan. Revisionist Zionism from the outset saw military conflict with the Arabs as inevitable and emphasized the development of military might. Revisionist Zionism championed the Irgun, which politically opposed Labor Zionists and militarily opposed the British Mandate, and eventually formed the Israeli Likud party, Israel's dominant political party. Israeli prime ministers Menachem Begin and Ariel Sharon were Revisionist Zionists.

Religious Zionism:

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, the first Chief Rabbi of the Ashkenazi Community in Palestine, was the earliest leader of the form of Religious Zionism most prevalent in Israel today. Religious Zionism maintains that the Jewish people and the Torah are only complete within the land of Israel. Religious Zionism as a modern movement gained popularity in 1967, when Israel captured the West Bank, known by some religious and nationalist Jews as *Yehudah V'Shomron*, named for the ancient Jewish kingdoms who governed the land. This area is where the Jewish patriarchs and matriarchs are buried, and contains most Jewish holy sites. Religious Zionism birthed *Gush Emunim* (the Bloc of the Faithful) a 1970s Orthodox movement to establish Jewish **settlements** in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Golan Heights. Religious Zionists view relinquishment of any part of the West Bank as against God's will, and continue to fight for full Israeli sovereignty over these areas. (For more information, see "Religious Roots" p.47).

Wait, are there any non-Jewish Zionists?

Christian Zionism, founded by William Hechler in 1880, supports the Jewish people's return to the biblical land of Israel, seen as the fulfillment of a prophecy that will enable Jesus' return. Christian Zionism is prevalent today among right-wing Evangelical Christians in America, an important constituency when it comes to American Israel policy. (In 2017, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated at a Christians United for Israel conference, "Israel has no better friend in America than you.")⁵¹

Looking at all of these Zionisms, it becomes clear that the word "Zionism" is not as specific as it seems. Someone identifying with Zionism could be expressing anything from longing to live freely in the biblical Jewish homeland, to the specific establishment of the state of Israel in its contemporary location. At the same time, this also means that opposing the modern state of Israel's actions is not necessarily anti-Zionist, and that even when someone identifies as anti-Zionist, it's not obvious what that person is "anti-." The lesson here is that language can be misleading. We can't lump all people who identify as Zionists, or anti-Zionists, together, presuming they support or reject the same ideas by adopting the same tag-lines. We encourage our readers to avoid assuming others' specific stances on Israel/Palestine based only on their broad identification as Zionists or anti-Zionists.

The Zionism That Won (Political Zionism)

The foundation of the state of Israel was primarily championed by Political Zionism, which "won" over the other forms of Zionism above. Theodor Herzl, an Austrian-Jewish playwright, is known as the father of modern Political Zionism and thus the modern Zionist movement. Herzl's Political Zionism centered on the idea that statehood in Palestine was necessary to achieve Jewish safety and autonomy. Focusing on steps like acquiring charters and sovereignty, Herzl sought to establish a Jewish nation-state that was recognized by world powers. He held the First Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland in 1897, during which the Zionist Organization (now known as the **World Zionist Organization**), was founded as a non-governmental organization promoting Zionism. At this conference, the Zionist Organization created their platform, known as the Basel Program, which stated that Zionism aimed to establish "a secure haven, under public law, for the Jewish people in the Land of Israel." Members of the Second Aliyah, the 1904-1914 immigration wave of Jewish immigrants fleeing Yemen and Czarist Russia, played an integral role in instituting Political Zionism by founding rural settlements, building modern towns, and establishing the first industrial enterprises in pre-state Israel. These immigrants also established the first *kibbutz*, Kibbutz Degania,



Theodor Herzl

developed the suburb of Ahuzat Bayit into the city of Tel Aviv, created HaShomer, the first Jewish self-defense organization in **Mandate Palestine**, and strengthened Hebrew as a spoken language by publishing Hebrew literature and newspapers.

Political Traction

Zionism was not always a widely-accepted, well-known ideology, even among Jews. Like all political movements, it rose in popularity and came to fruition as a result of particular historical events.

In the early-20th century, European governments played an important role in laying the groundwork for a Jewish homeland in the biblical land of Israel. After seizing the territory from the **Ottoman Empire** during WWI, Britain established the British Mandate in 1918, invoking "the historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine." The League of Nations recognized the British Mandate in 1922, entrusting Britain to create a "Jewish homeland in Palestine." The support from these Western world powers – who, likely due to their own racial and cultural biases, preferred European Jewish control to Arab control of the region – bolstered and enabled the Zionist cause. In this way, Zionism can be understood as an instrument of British imperialism, despite the fact that

most Jews did not perceive it that way at the time. Due to a number of historical events, Zionists eventually came to see Britain as the enemy (see "A (Very) Brief History" p.60). However, Britain's imperial motivations when supporting the establishment of the state of Israel reflects the in-between-ness intrinsic to the Jewish condition, which often leads to antisemitism. Once again, Jews, and ultimately the Jewish state, played a middleman role (see "Interstitiality" p.35).

The Holocaust was the tipping point for Zionism's broad acceptance by Jews. Germany's **genocide** of 6 million European Jews seemed to definitively answer the ques-

*"Even in the face of rising antisemitism, for most of its history, Zionism remained a distinctly minority view in Jewish communities around the world, opposed by the vast majority of rabbinic and lay leaders. This situation changed only after the murder of 6 million Jews in the Holocaust when the **need for an independent Jewish state to serve as a safe haven for Jews became not only widespread but central to Jewish consciousness around the world.**"*

Jewish Historian Dr. Michael Stanislawski, "Zionism: A Very Short Introduction"¹⁶²

tion of whether Jewish assimilation or safety was possible in non-Jewish countries, and Zionism as a political project became far more central within global Jewish and Jewish-allied consciousness.

Zionist posters,
U.S. & Spain, c. 1940

In 1885, the Central Conference of American Rabbis released the Pittsburgh Platform on behalf of the Reform movement.

*"We consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community, and therefore **expect neither a return to Palestine, nor a sacrificial worship under the sons of Aaron, nor the restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state...**"⁵³*

In 1937, they released the Columbus Platform.

*"In view of the changes that have taken place in the modern world and the consequent need of stating anew the teachings of Reform Judaism, the Central Conference of American Rabbis makes the following declaration of principles... **Judaism is the soul of which Israel is the body.** ... 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."⁵⁴*

Note the stark differences between these two platforms. The Nazi Party rose to power in between their publications.



"Let us be more specific: had Zionism and its demands not existed, what would have become of the survivors of the ghettos and the camps, the partisans emerging from the forests and mountains who, according to all logic, should have scorned the human race and dedicated themselves to hating and despising it?"

Holocaust Survivor & Activist Elie Wiesel, "One Generation After"⁵⁵

Zionism as Both Jewish Liberation & Settler-Colonialism

In this resource, we're striving to both honor the Jewish intent of Zionism, as well as acknowledge its impact on Palestinians. We must understand that, though Zionism (and the state it birthed, Israel) provided safe refuge and self-determination to Jews after centuries of persecution, it also inflicted violence and forced displacement upon Palestinians.

*Zionism has been experienced by millions of Jews as a global **liberatory movement** that established a **refuge and safe haven from anti-Jewish oppression**.*



*Zionism has been experienced as **settler-colonialism** and **ethnic cleansing** by millions of Palestinians.*

Understanding both of these truths is crucial to grasping some of the most fundamental points at which conversations about Zionism and anti-Zionism tend to create misunderstanding, harm, and feelings of erasure for both Jews and Palestinians. Many Zionists were conscious of the settler-colonial nature of their movement. Several of Israel's founders openly expressed the need to remove Palestinians in order to achieve their goal of establishing a Jewish state in Palestine. For example, *The Iron Wall*, a manifesto by founder of Revisionist Zionism Ze'ev Jabotinsky (see "Revisionist Zionism" p.50), asserted that settler-colonization of the Arab populations in Palestine was necessary to the Zionist project, and needed to be carried out at all costs. He states, "Every native population in the world resists colonists as long as it



Settler-colonialism is the process by which a people replaces an indigenous population by settling on their land.⁵⁶

*"The Arab has been on the receiving end not of benign Zionism – which has been restricted to Jews – but of an **essentially discriminatory and powerful culture**, of which, in Palestine, Zionism has been the agent."*

Palestinian Scholar Dr. Edward Said, "Zionism from the Standpoint of its Victims"⁵⁷

has the slightest hope of being able to rid itself of the danger of being colonised."⁵⁸ Furthermore, the slogan, "A land without a people for a people without a land," was commonly employed by Zionists as propaganda for the establishment of Israel, erasing the presence of Palestinians who had been living in the land for centuries.

Competing Claims to Indigeneity

Both the Jewish and Palestinian peoples rightfully claim indigeneity in present-day Israel/Palestine. Jewish claims to indigeneity are often used to dispute the assertion that Zionism is a settler-colonial project. Zionism is distinct from other settler-colonial enterprises because it involves the return of a people to their religious and national homeland, rather than merely a conquest of indigenous peoples. The historic indigeneity of Jews in present-day Israel/Palestine complicates the application of European settler-colonialist frameworks to Jews who see themselves as returning to their ancestral land. Still, though Jews have had a sustained presence in the land since biblical times, the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 marked the first period of Jewish national sovereignty in the land in over 2,000 years. We must honor the

*"And all I can think, as always, is how intertwined and inextricable our stories are, how tightly linked our futures. Neither Israelis nor Palestinians are going anywhere because **most of us have nowhere else to go**. We are destined to share this land. Neither of us can possibly win until we find a way for all of us to win."*

Leah Solomon, Chief Education Officer, Encounter Programs, "We Are Destined to Share This Land"⁵⁹

distinction between ancient indigeneity and inhabiting a place throughout recent history. Jewish claims to Israel as their homeland should not discount the impact of re-settling on land in which Palestinians have been the majority for generations.

Considerations for Zionists & Anti-Zionists

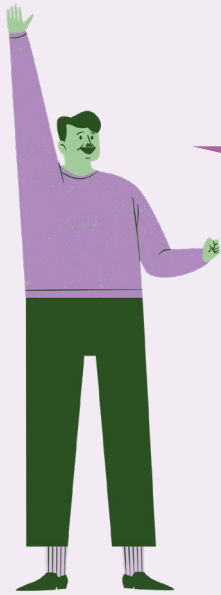
The labels “Zionist” and “anti-Zionist” can be insufficient in capturing individuals' particular belief systems. Hence, we prioritize *values*, *visions*, and *behaviors* over interpretable terms. We believe that the most productive way to indicate our relationships to Zionism and the state of Israel is by talking about the specific stances we uphold, and acting accordingly. We also know that these labels will persist in our identities and activism. So, here are some notes for navigating dialogue about Zionism and anti-Zionism in ways that adhere to our book's purpose.



Like many ideologies, Zionism and anti-Zionism can be taken to extremes. Extreme versions of Zionism and anti-Zionism *lose sight of the humanity on both sides of the Israel/Palestine conflict* and, as a consequence, become problematic.

When Zionists become comfortable dismissing the basic rights of Palestinians in order to secure Jewish safety and prosperity in the land of Israel, they can veer into racist and/or Islamophobic rhetoric. When anti-Zionists dismiss the validity of Jews' historic and religious connections to the land of Israel and the right for Jewish Israelis to live free of violence, they can veer into antisemitism.





Cognizant of the dangers at these extremes, we implore Zionists and anti-Zionists to respect the basic human rights of all people, and to critically engage with the histories, theories, and present realities of all the different stakeholders in Israel/Palestine.

Broadly, Zionists maintain that history has shown that Jews remained unsafe without a state, and/or believe in the Jewish right to self-determination in their homeland, and thus support the existence of Israel as a Jewish state. We ask that Zionists also acknowledge the harm that Zionism has inflicted upon Palestinians, as well as work to understand the depth of Palestinian connection to the land of Israel, and the negative impact Israel's establishment has on Palestinian life.



Broadly, anti-Zionists oppose the settler-colonial impact of Zionism and criticize the movement for prioritizing Jewish lives over others. We ask that anti-Zionists also recognize the historical persecution of the Jewish people, as well as work to understand the Jewish right to safety and historical and religious connections to the biblical land of Israel.

A Call for Clarity & Compassion

As is implied in this guide's title, we aim to fight antisemitism while committing to justice for all. As a result, we respect versions of Zionism and anti-Zionism that honor both Jewish and Palestinian liberation, safety, and justice, and we advocate humility and genuine curiosity as we approach these conversations.

We also know that upholding ideologies with steadfast commitments to justice for all is a difficult and ongoing task. We hope that this guidebook will jumpstart the journey for our readers to interrogate the ideas and intentions behind their activism. We encourage those who identify as Zionists to engage with and consider visions for how to end state-sponsored Palestinian oppression, and those who identify as anti-Zionists to engage with and consider visions for how to ensure that Jews would remain safe and maintain access to their holy sites without a sovereign land.

At the end of the day, it is important to be specific about our own politics, and avoid assuming others understand the terms we are using in the same way that we do. For a Zionist – who sees Zionism as the process by which Jews achieve liberation – hearing someone describe themselves as an anti-Zionist can sound like someone saying that they want Jews to suffer persecution and displacement. And, for an anti-Zionist – who sees Zionism as the Israeli government's ongoing violence towards Palestinians – hearing someone describe themselves as a Zionist sounds the same as someone saying they want to perpetuate Palestinian oppression.



What is Israel?

On a very basic level, the state of Israel is the Jewish nation-state that declared independence in 1948. Israel is located in the biblical land of Israel, regarded as the Holy Land by Jews, between Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea. The state of Israel comprises most of the territory in former **Mandate Palestine** and militarily occupies territory in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, formerly controlled by Jordan and primarily inhabited by people who identify as Palestinians. As of the 2019 census, Israel had a population of about 9 million, roughly 75% of which identified as Jewish, 20% as Arab, and 5% as “other.”⁶⁰ According to a 2019 study, 44.9% of Israel’s Jewish population identified as either Mizrahi or Sephardi, 44.2% identified as Ashkenazi, about 3% as Ethiopian, and 7.9% as mixed or other.⁶¹

The Word “Israel”

The ancient Jewish kingdom in the land was known as the Kingdom of Israel, and Jews in antiquity were commonly called the “Children of Israel” or “Israelites.” This is because Jacob, the Jewish patriarch, was given the name Israel (Yisrael, Hebrew for “to struggle with God”) after wrestling with an angel. Jacob’s twelve sons became fathers of the 12 Tribes of Israel, thus, in the Bible and even in common parlance, Jews are referred to as simply “Israel.” This is where the state got its name. Although the word “Israel” is often assumed to denote the state of Israel today, it can also refer to these historical and religious meanings.

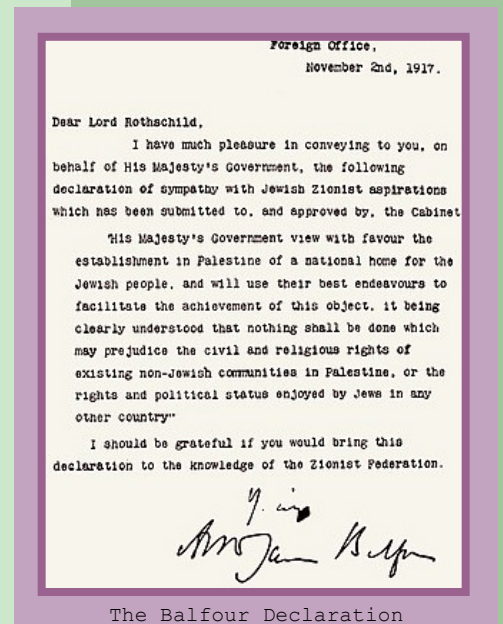
We are not historians, but we intend to offer what we are aware is an incomplete sketch of some of the major events and players in the foundation of the modern state of Israel in order to frame our larger conversation about antisemitism. Like any history, the history of Israel/Palestine is a story, and can be told in a myriad of ways. For a more comprehensive dual-narrative historical accounts of Israel/Palestine, we recommend *Arabs and Israelis: Conflict and Peacemaking in the Middle East* by Abdel Monem Said Aly, Shai Feldman, Khalil Shikaki, and *Side by Side: Parallel Histories of Israel-Palestine* by Sami Adwan, Dan Bar-On, and Eyal Naveh, plus more (see “Recommended Resources” p.118).

The land that comprises the current state of Israel had been a part of the Ottoman Empire from 1517 until the end of WWI, when Britain gained control of the region. In the late 1800s, a large wave of Jewish refugees from Eastern Europe and Yemen, known as “the first *aliyah*,” began immigrating to Palestine to escape antisemitic violence in their homelands. Their arrival sparked early hostilities between the existing Arab population of Palestine and the growing Jewish population, most of whom were immigrants. This was also around the same time that Zionism was gaining popularity in some European Jewish intellectual circles (see “Political Trac-tion” p.52).

In the 1920s and 1930s, Jews in the land of Israel began building social, economic, political, and military institutions – sometimes known as “the state before the State” or the **Yishuv**, Hebrew for “settlement.” This pre-state organizing laid the institutional, infrastructural, and administrative groundwork that enabled the state of Israel to support itself by the time it began to fight for its existence in the mid-20th century. Because the Yishuv revolved around settlement, this period saw continuous displacement of Palestinian people throughout the region.

In 1917, Britain published the Balfour Declaration, a statement of British support for the establishment of a “national home for the Jewish people in Palestine.” Shortly afterwards, at the end of WWI and during the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Britain conquered the land that comprises today's state of Israel and declared its borders. The League of Nations (the predecessor to the **United Nations** (U.N.)) issued the Mandate for Palestine to Britain in 1920, allowing for British administration of Palestine. The British Mandate in Palestine lasted from the fall of the Ottoman Empire to 1948. During this time, the British made conflicting commitments: to European Jewry in support of a Jewish national home in Palestine, and to indigenous non-Jewish Arabs in Palestine in support of their independence. Hence, the British Mandate period was characterized by constant conflict between Jews, local Arab populations, and the British.

In November 1947, the United Nations proposed the U.N. Partition Plan for Palestine, intending to resolve increasing antagonism by facilitating British withdrawal from Mandatory Palestine and dividing it into separate Jewish and Palestinian states. The Jewish leadership and population in Palestine, who were smaller in number but allocated more land (56% of Mandate Palestine territory) accepted the



plan; the resident Arab-Palestinian community did not. The conflict over the Partition Plan brought local Arab-Palestinian forces and Zionist militias into civil war.

The U.N. Partition Plan declared the official end of the British Mandate to be May 14, 1948. Having accepted the plan, the Jewish Agency for Israel (the central institution of the Yishuv), chaired by David Ben-Gurion, declared Israel's independence on this date, claiming sovereignty over the land that was allotted to them. Israel's declaration of statehood in May 1948 precipitated the first Arab-Israeli war: five neighboring countries – Jordan, Iraq, Syria, Egypt and Lebanon – fought against the newly formed state, in large part motivated by their own national interests. Israel won this war, expanding its borders beyond the territory it had been allocated in the Partition Plan and fortifying its independence and legitimacy as a sovereign state. Jordan and Egypt seized control of the territories not won by Israel.

During the 1948 war, approximately 700,000 native Palestinians (roughly half of pre-war Palestine's Arab population), fled or were expelled from their homes. The 1948 war and the continued displacement, erasure, and fracturing of Palestinian society, is known as the *Nakba*, meaning “Catastrophe” in Arabic. For an extensive archive of Palestinian oral histories of the *Nakba*, check out the [Zochrot Testimonies](#). This war also prompted an influx of Jewish refugees from Arab lands across the Middle East and North Africa, where anti-Jewish violence spiked following the foundation of Israel. These roughly 700,000 immigrants doubled the Jewish population in Israel between 1948 and 1956, changing Israeli Jewish society from one of primarily Europeans to one that was much more diverse.



Israel's next major war took place in 1967, and is known as the Six Day War to Jews or the *Naksa*, “Setback,” to Palestinians. Israel fought this war against Jordan, Syria, and Egypt, and decisively won in six days, capturing the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan, and the Golan Heights from Syria. This established the majority of Israel's current borders and began Israel's military **occupation**, which continues today in the West Bank.

There is so much more history and context that – though both significant and relevant – is beyond the scope of this project. There have been many additional wars and two intifadas (Palestinian uprisings), and there are many groups, events, and narratives that we have neither the space nor expertise to discuss. We, again, direct you to the sources mentioned elsewhere (see “Recommended Resources” p.118).

Israeli Occupation, Blockade & Settlements

The West Bank and Gaza are often referred to as the "occupied territories" or "Palestinian territories." Israel captured these territories from Jordan and Egypt respectively during the 1967 war, but Israel never **annexed** them, in order to avoid creating an Arab majority in Israel proper. Israel technically ended its military occupation of Gaza in 2005, but continues to **blockade Gaza**, controlling who and what comes in and out of the area, and still holds the West Bank under occupation. In the West Bank, Israel uses its governmental authority to facilitate the expansion of Jewish **settlements**, displacing Palestinian families throughout the land.



Israeli wall surrounding the West Bank, 2015

International bodies, such as Amnesty International, charge that the blockade and the conduct of the Israeli occupation are marked by systematically illegal policies and violate Palestinian human rights. The vast majority of legal authorities (including the International Criminal Court of Justice) view Israel's settlements as illegal under the Geneva Convention.

The Israeli government justifies its occupation of the West Bank and blockade of Gaza as security measures, asserting that they allow Israel to restrict the flow of weapons to anti-Israel terrorist organizations. Religious fervor and political motivations also prevent the country from relinquishing its control over these regions. To some, Israel's actions in the West Bank and Gaza constitute legitimate reclamation of Jewish sovereignty in the region and of a God-given right to the area once ruled by the ancient Jewish kingdom.



Pro-Israel protesters, London, 2021

To others, the occupation and blockade are inhumane barriers to peace between Israelis and Palestinians. Critics of Israel's actions in the West Bank and Gaza advocate for the **Palestinian Right of Return**, which the Israeli government does not currently recognize. Some also argue that Israel's actions in the West Bank and Gaza further jeopardize Israeli safety by creating tensions in the region.



Map from the United Nations
Department of Peacekeeping Operations
Cartographic Section

Why Israel Matters to Jews Today



Before the establishment of the state of Israel, “refugee” was the most common modifier to accompany the word “Jew” throughout the 19th century. Even today, many Jews in the Diaspora lack the ability to return to the countries where their families lived for centuries as anything other than tourists of graveyards or the sites of their ancestors’ persecution, or even to safely return as visitors at all.



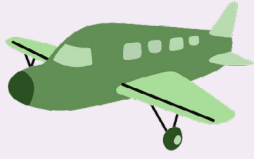
Israel is also the only place where Hebrew – the language of Jewish holy texts – is spoken, and where the Jewish calendar is observed on a formal, society-wide level. For example, establishments close on Saturdays, the Jewish Sabbath/Shabbat (day of rest), rather than Sundays, and on Jewish holidays, rather than Christmas, New Years, etc.. Israel houses all of Judaism’s sacred sites, and there are certain commandments Jews can only practice in the land (see “Religious Roots” p.47).



Today, nearly half of world Jewry lives in Israel, and many Jews in the Diaspora have family and friends there. As a result, caring about the Jewish people often means caring about what happens in Israel.



Since its establishment, Israel has pragmatically functioned as a safe haven for Jews facing persecution in their native lands. Between 1948 and 1951, 260,000 Jews from the Middle East and North Africa immigrated to Israel because they faced threats of genocide and violence from their governments and community leaders. Between 1949 and 1950, Israel airlifted 49,000 Yemenite Jews to Israel who suffered



political persecution and public hostility at home, in a plan known as Operation Magic Carpet, also known as Operation on Wings of Eagles. After a series of bombings of Jewish targets in Baghdad in 1951, Israel began Operations Ezra and Nehemiah, during which the country airlifted 120,000 and 130,000 Iraqi Jews to Israel. Beginning in 1973, Ethiopia was under the rule of dictator Mengistu Haile Mariam, who persecuted the Beta Israel Jewish community there. By 1984, 8,000 Jews had immigrated to Israel when Mengistu banned Jewish emigration and, later that year, Israel secretly flew roughly 7,000 Ethiopian Jews to Israel. In 1991, when the Ethiopian government was on the verge of collapse, Israel flew over 14,000 Ethiopian Jews to Israel in a two-day window known as Operation Solomon.



Due to all of the above, Israel education is a major component of Jewish communal life and educational programming. Many Jewish day schools, summer camps, and universities (see “Taglit-Birthright Israel” p.79) organize for young Jews to visit the state and celebrate Israeli holidays like the Day of Independence as Jewish holidays. As a result, many Jews learn about and develop connections to the state from a very young age.



*“Jewishness is no more or less than **the totality of whatever the Jewish people are doing** at any given moment in history. On a concrete level, the **upbuilding of the state of Israel** is a major part of what the Jewish people have been doing on the planet over the last 100 years.”*

Researcher Ben Lorber, "Zionism is Not 'Not' Judaism"⁶²

Zionism, Israel,
Judaism & Antisemitism:
Where Does Each
Start & Stop?

Now...

We have learned what Zionism, Israel, Judaism and antisemitism mean. It's time to determine what they have to do with one another. Identifying when and how Israel, Zionism, and Judaism intersect, overlap, and diverge is vital to any coherent conversation about each topic. If we don't have consensus on what Zionism means, we can't discuss anti-Zionism. And, if we don't have consensus on where and how Zionism fits within Judaism, we can't know how anti-Zionism lands for Jews. In this section, we'll take a look at how all of this plays out.

- 1 Criticizing Zionism & Israel
Avoiding blanket statements.
- 2 Excising Zionism & Israel
Unfairly expecting Jews to cut Zionism or Israel out of their identity.
- 3 Requiring Zionism & Israel
Unfairly expecting Jews to answer for or have a stance on Zionism or Israel.
- 4 Abstracting Zionism & Israel
Unfairly expecting Jews to disregard loved ones living in Israel.
- 5 Good Jew, Bad Jew Dilemma
Conditional acceptance of Jews based on their positions regarding Zionism or Israel.

Criticizing Zionism & Israel

While criticisms of Zionism and/or Israel are not inherently antisemitic, they can easily become such. Zionism birthed the state of Israel, and Israel houses nearly half of world Jewry, serving as a critical spiritual, cultural, and national center for Jews (see “Why Israel Matters to Jews Today” p.65). Hence, critiques of Zionism and/or Israel can feel like Jew-hatred to Jews. And, sometimes, criticizing Zionism and/or Israel is just a more socially acceptable way to get away with antisemitism.

Our goal is for both Zionists and anti-Zionists to understand how they are perceived, and the ways their language impacts others. In general, accusations of antisemitism are *levelled too broadly by Zionist groups* and *dismissed too readily by anti-Zionist groups* when talking about Israel. This harms both Jews and Palestinians: indiscriminately proclaiming all anti-Zionist activism antisemitic makes anti-Zionist activists less likely to take accusations of antisemitism seriously, and, failing to address accusations of antisemitism creates an environment in which antisemitism can grow unchecked.

Avoiding blanket statements is important here. Saying things like “all criticism of Israel is antisemitic” and “no criticism of Israel is antisemitic” contributes to this vicious cycle, causing proponents of each argument to dig in their heels. We must think critically about statements regarding Zionism, Israel and antisemitism, regardless of their source.

~~all criticism of Israel
is antisemitic~~

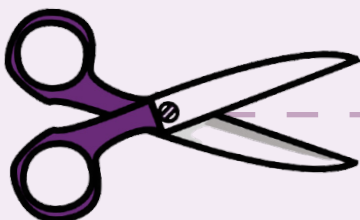
~~no criticism of Israel
is antisemitic~~

Excising Zionism & Israel

Zionism is by no means synonymous with Judaism, but, as the title of a 2016 article by Ben Lorber states, "Zionism is not *not* Judaism." Over the past century, Zionism and the state it birthed have politically, culturally, and religiously transformed Judaism and Jewish identity (see "Why Israel Matters to Jews Today" p.65). Hence, expecting Jews to excise Zionism and/or Israel from their Judaism may mean asking them to eviscerate their Jewish identity.⁶³

"Judaism/Jewishness is not simply a static set of rituals, practices, and a belief system. It is also the embodied, lived experience and narrative of a people, unfolding in history and time... It is an unavoidable fact that, especially over the last half-century, the Zionist project has taken center stage in the hearts and minds of most Jews on the planet... Judaism is not simply a 'faith'... but also a people. To excise the ugly 'national/peoplehood' component in order to fit what remains in a Western (Christian) framework [of religion]... is to mangle and amputate Jewishness itself... Judaism and being Jewish is an inherently collective, politicized peoplehood that includes the lived collective experiences, in the modern age, of Israel and Zionism."

Researcher Ben Lorber, "Zionism is Not 'Not' Judaism"⁶⁴



Personal story

Elana N. C.

I know there's a difference between knowing something intellectually and feeling something emotionally. But when these two feelings, one coming from my brain and the other from my heart, are at complete odds, I feel trapped in the dissonance. How can I be in love with a place that represents values so opposed to those I hold? How can I feel so at home in a land built upon suffering, violence, and dispossession? How do I reconcile the fact that my peoples' liberation has come at the expense of another peoples'? Though I may not have answers to these questions, I do have stories and experiences that I stand upon. I recall traveling to Israel a few years ago for a Torah-study retreat with a group of middle-aged Israeli and American Jews and their families. I was strolling through the shuk (open-air market) in Tel Aviv on December 25th. Not once was I greeted with 'merry Christmas,' nor did I encounter an image of Santa Claus all day. No Miah Carey, no scent of pine, no red and green plastered across every storefront. I usually spend the day on December 25th thinking about a holiday that I don't celebrate, but instead this day felt like any other. My experience of Christmas in Israel was such a breath of fresh air from my day-to-day life entrenched in Christian hegemony here in the United States, and it reminded me of the stark reality of what it means to be a Jew in the diaspora – to be othered. I will surely continue to fight against settlement expansion, annexation, and occupation while advocating for equity, justice, and Palestinian self-determination, yet I will never forget the deep comfort of truly living out Jewish peoplehood in the state of Israel.

Requiring Zionism & Israel

While it's not fair to expect people's Judaism to be devoid of Zionism and/or Israel, it's also not fair to expect every Jew to have an opinion on, or to "answer for" Zionism and/or Israel. In other words, *the legitimacy of someone's Judaism does not hinge on their personal connection or ability to explain these topics.* Plenty of Jews today, particularly in places like the U.S. where Jews are generally thriving, do not consider Israel a central part of their cultural or religious identity, and some openly reject it. This does not make them any less Jewish. Requiring knowledge of and connection to Zionism and/or Israel from Jews is essentializing and makes those who lack information feel "not Jewish enough." At the same time, this assumption incorrectly tokenizes individual Jews as representatives of the entire Zionist movement or Israeli government writ-large.

Abstracting Zionism & Israel

Israel is not an abstraction, but involves real people in real situations. The enormous impact that Israel has had on modern Jewish consciousness and immigration has meant that many Diasporic Jews now have family and/or friends living in Israel (see “Why Israel Matters to Jews Today” p.65). It is important not to make assumptions about a person’s political relationship to Zionism and/or Israel based on their personal connections, or lack thereof, to the state of Israel and people who live there.

The Good Jew, Bad Jew Phenomenon

Expectations and assumptions about Jews’ relationships to Israel and/or Zionism make for sticky situations for Jews, both within Jewish communities and general society. Based on their Israel/Palestine politics (or lack thereof), a Jew might be considered a “good Jew” in some spaces, and a “bad Jew” in others: this is the Good Jew, Bad Jew Phenomenon.

Bari Weiss, journalist and author of *How to Fight Antisemitism*, sheds light on the Good Jew, Bad Jew Phenomenon in her description of what she calls “Purim vs. Hanukkah Antisemitism.” During both of these major holidays, Jews overcame two distinct forms of antisemitism.

The holiday of Purim commemorates a story from the biblical Book of Esther that is said to have occurred towards the end of the fifth century BCE, in which Persian Jewry is rescued from a genocide organized by a government official named Haman. Purim antisemitism, then, is clear and total opposition to Jews, exemplified by Haman’s blatant call to massacre the entire Jewish people. Purim antisemitism is the Holocaust, the Tree of Life shooting, the shouting of “Jews will not replace us” at the Unite the Right Rally. The Good Jew, Bad Jew Phenomenon is a little more tricky. This is where Hanukkah antisemitism comes in.

The holiday of Hanukkah celebrates the rededication of the Second Temple of Jerusalem. This rededication occurred in the second century BCE, after Antiochus, Hellenistic king of the Seleucid Empire, ordered the Jews to erect an altar of Zeus and sacrifice pigs in the Holy Temple, as well as outlawed *brit milah* (ritual circumcision of Jewish male babies), and other Jewish commandments. While Antiochus did not demand the destruction of the Temple or the massacre of the Jews like Haman, his demands were still rejections of Jewish practice. Hanukkah antisemitism is thus more subtle and insidious than Purim antisemitism. The Jews under Antiochus' rule were allowed to "be Jewish" as long as they filled their Temple with sacrilegious, non-Jewish items and eschewed Jewish rituals. In other words, they could be tolerated as Jews as long as they adapted their Judaism to be more palatable or, more accurately, mutilated it to the point of being unrecognizable.

Hanukkah antisemitism often comes up in left-leaning activist circles, where Jews are expected to disavow connection to and care for Israel in order to be considered "good Jews." This phenomenon takes place both in contexts where the Jew in question has openly expressed their relationship to Zionism and/or Israel, as well as those in which the activism at hand has nothing to do with these topics. For example, two Jewish women were kicked out of the 2017 Chicago

"An explicit disavowal of a connection to Israel shouldn't be a prerequisite for Jewish involvement in broader social justice issues. Imagine assuming that all Americans support President Trump's policies, or asking Americans to expressly disown their country before engaging in any international human rights campaigns."

Rabbi Jill Jacobs, "How to Tell When Criticism of Israel is Antisemitism"⁶⁵

Dyke March, an annual protest for lesbian rights, for carrying pride flags (rainbow-striped symbols of LGBTQ+ pride) with Stars of David (the symbol of Judaism, which also appears on the Israeli flag), due to the flags looking too much like the Israeli flag. Jews – including Zionists – have the right to participate in the fight for equality without having to either disavow or defend the Israeli government.

At the same time, Jews should not be assumed incapable of bigotry when it comes to conversations about Zionism simply because they are



Flag at Chicago Dyke March, 2017

Jewish. If a Jewish person outwardly expresses views regarding Israel's actions that seem incongruous with the mission of a progressive space in which they want to engage, it's reasonable for others in said space to want to engage them in deeper conversation. This opportunity for dialogue is important. Firstly, as we explained earlier, misunderstandings of what Zionism and anti-Zionism mean to different people can make for harmful assumptions, and clarifying individual relationships to these terms makes for more productive conversations (see "A Call for Clarity & Compassion" p.58). Secondly, this sort of discourse encourages Jewish people who speak out about Israel and/or Zionism to clarify their own beliefs and intentions.

The point here is not to make sweeping judgements about Jews, just as Jews should not make sweeping judgements about other groups. Jews should neither be barred from participating in social justice movements due to assumptions about their relationships to Zionism and/or Israel, nor considered exempt from upholding progressive values vis-à-vis Zionism and/or Israel if involved in related activism.



Avoiding Antisemitism

How to Tell When Criticism of Israel is Antisemitic

As written by Rabbi Jill Jacobs for the Washington Post⁶⁶

When trying to determine whether a particular criticism of Israel (or Zionism) is really antisemitic, think back to the tropes and manifestations discussed in prior sections, and try asking yourself the following questions.

Does this criticism of Israel...

1. See Jews as insidious influencers behind the scenes of world events?
2. Assume that the Israeli government speaks for all Jews?
3. Dismiss the humanity of Israelis?
4. Deny Jewish history?
5. Use the word “Zionist” as code for “Jew” or “Israeli”?

How to Criticize Israel Without Being Antisemitic

As written by UC Berkeley Antisemitism Education Initiative⁶⁷

It is entirely possible to criticize Israel (or Zionism) without being antisemitic. Here are some tips for how to avoid antisemitism when criticizing Israel.

1. Be as specific as possible.
2. Indicate which policies you are upset about, and that they come from specific actors in a specific government.
3. Avoid rhetoric or images that could remind people of the classic antisemitic stereotypes discussed in this resource.
4. Avoid speaking about “the Jews” as if they are the same as the Israeli government and avoid describing Jews as “the Zionists.”
5. Be aware that not everyone may understand “Zionism” to mean the same thing as you do.
6. Remember that not all Jews are Zionists and that many Zionists speak out actively against the policies of the Israeli government.

Zionism, Israel, Judaism & Antisemitism: What About College Campuses?



Mapping out the landscape...

As stated in our introduction, this guidebook began as a way to address our own confusion amidst the often cacophonous array of voices on campus talking about Zionism, Israel/Palestine, Judaism, and antisemitism. Throughout our college experiences, we have witnessed countless conversations around these topics go off the rails. Hence, we believe that a concise "who's who" guide like the one to follow will serve as a useful tool for our readers in navigating their own campus landscapes of organizations and movements that deal with Israel/Palestine activism and/or Judaism. We hope that this section will help our readers more productively engage with their surroundings, and feel more confident in pinpointing and combatting antisemitism along the way.



This list is not exhaustive.

We have chosen to include the following groups and organizations because we consider them to be the most central players in conversations around the above topics. The information here is not intended to encompass the totality of each group, or students' experiences with them, but rather to provide our perspective on how they fit into campus dialogue and activism around Zionism, Israel/Palestine, Judaism, and antisemitism. These organizations are presented alphabetically.

Jewish Life & Israel Programming

Hillel International



Hillel centers on campus are generally affiliated with the umbrella organization Hillel International. Originally known as the Foundation for Jewish Campus Life, Hillel International was founded in 1923 in order to combat antisemitism and Jewish quotas at universities as well as to cultivate strong Jewish identity among young people.

Part of Hillel International's mission is connecting young Jews to the state of Israel, valuing the state's role as a Jewish spiritual, cultural, and political hub. Their website states, "Israel is at the heart of Hillel's work. Our goal is to inspire every Jewish college student to develop a meaningful and enduring relationship to Israel and to Israelis."⁶⁸ Hillel International operates according to certain policies regarding Israel, including the "Standards of Partnership," guidelines which prohibit funding formal collaboration between Hillel-affiliated groups and officially anti-Zionist student groups. While the particular way in which these standards are applied varies from campus to campus, some of our Jewish friends (and even some of us) have felt isolated and silenced by this protocol.

Hillel Campus Centers

Hillel centers on campuses, often just called "Hillels," are organizations generally affiliated with (though not funded by) Hillel International. Campus Hillels serve as spiritual, cultural, and educational communities for Jewish students. Today, Hillel operates on more than 600 college campuses in 18 countries, serving as centers for university Jewish communities. Some Hillels are private 501C3s (independent, tax-exempt, charitable organizations that engage in educational and cultural work) and some are campus clubs funded directly by their university. For example, our campus affiliate, Brown RISD Hillel, serves students at Brown University and the Rhode Island School of Design and is an independent 501C3 organization with its own budget, building, and board of directors separate from those of Brown University or Hillel International.

Campus Hillels are often charged with being political by nature of their affiliation with Hillel International, given the organization's pro-Israel policies. In addition to often displaying Israeli flags in their buildings, campus Hillels offer robust programming related to Israel, as is common in mainstream American Jewish institutions (see "Why Israel Matters to Jews Today" p.65). Campus Hillels may also partner with more explicitly political and pro-Israel groups to sponsor events and programs, and some have stepped forward in an institutional capacity to defend Israel on college campuses. However, the Zionism, or lack thereof, of students involved in or associated with individual Hillels varies widely. In general, campus Hillels are the only official spaces for Jewish students to practice their religion and engage with their culture and community. As a result, writing off or vilifying Hillel and/or its affiliated students and professionals veers into antisemitism, because it has the effect of writing off or vilifying any Jew engaging there, regardless of their relationship to Israel and/or Zionism.



Vandalism at U. of Oregon Hillel, 2018

Despite the varied attitudes towards Israel and/or Zionism among students connected to them, campus Hillels often bear the brunt of any campus resentment towards the state of Israel. As visible centers for Jewish life on campus, campus Hillels often unfairly become targets of hate. Vandalism of campus Hillel buildings has increased over the past few years.^{69,70,71}

Taglit-Birthright Israel



Birthright Israel, also known as *Taglit*, Hebrew for “discovery,” is a program that provides free travel opportunities to Israel for Jewish participants aged 18 to 32 from more than 68 countries. On these 10-day, all-expenses-paid trips, participants engage in outdoor recreational activities, tour Israeli institutions, visit landmarks including a “Zionist heritage site,” and hear from Israeli speakers, most of whom are Jewish.⁷² The ticket that

Taglit-Birthright funds is good for up to 3 months, and participant post-program plans are not subject to Birthright approval. Once in Israel, participants are allowed to travel, volunteer, or study anywhere they want within Israel/Palestine.

Taglit-Birthright is currently the largest educational tourism organization in the world, and has supported over 750,000 trips to Israel since its foundation in 1999. *Taglit*-Birthright is funded by the Government of Israel, the Jewish Agency for Israel, the North American Jewish Federation system, the United Israel Appeal, and private donors. Armenia and Greece now also have Birthright trips for their Diasporic communities. *Taglit*-Birthright's programs have contributed over \$1.5 billion to the Israeli economy.⁷³



Taglit-Birthright has been criticized for its lack of programming that acknowledges Palestinian life in Israel, and many pro-Palestinian Jewish activist groups like Jewish Voice for Peace have organized campaigns to highlight these perceived issues (see "Jewish Voice for Peace" p.85). Though individual trip leaders can elect to include additional conversations and educational content, *Taglit*-Birthright trips focus primarily on Jewish life in Israel, and are not permitted to travel into the Palestinian territories. In recent years, *Taglit*-Birthright has increased offerings featuring narratives of Palestinians, but tour operators must still opt-in to incorporate these opportunities.

Taglit-Birthright has also been charged with flaunting the disparity between Jews' and Palestinians' access to Israel. Some are offended by the premise that a Jew – regardless of ties to Israel – is welcomed into the country with a free trip, while Palestinians – whose parents and grandparents may have been forcibly removed from Israel over the past several decades – cannot even enter the land (the name "Birthright" reinforces this sense of entitlement).



In 2014, a Brown University student leader of Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) of Palestinian heritage wrote a piece entitled, "Where's My Birthright?" The student addressed Jewish peers considering going on *Taglit*-Birthright by stating, "Your ability to call Israel your 'right' came at the expense of millions of Palestinian refugees; it came at the expense of lives and homes and villages and stories and memories."⁷⁴ Supporters of *Taglit*-Birthright

might respond to this statement by pointing out that many Jews cannot meaningfully visit their families' homelands due to those areas being destroyed or unsafe for them as Jews, and, as a result, Jewish encounters with a thriving Jewish society are imperative (see "Why Israel Matters to Jews Today" p.65).

Campus Activism

American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) Campus Affiliates



The American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) is a lobbying group with the mission to “encourage and persuade the U.S. government to enact specific policies that create a strong, enduring, and mutually beneficial relationship with our ally Israel.”⁷⁵ Part of AIPAC’s work is student engagement, including campus affiliate groups across the country. These groups organize around AIPAC’s goals to advocate for policies that “strengthen and expand the U.S.-Israel relationship in ways that enhance the security of the United States and Israel.”⁷⁶ AIPAC and its campus affiliates support the existence of a secure Jewish state and a demilitarized Palestinian state, and openly seek to combat BDS efforts (see “Boycott, Divestment, & Sanctions” p.82). Students from over 630 campuses attend the AIPAC annual conference in Washington, DC. AIPAC also hosts bi-annual leadership programs, known as Saban Seminars, during which students from across America meet in D.C. to develop their pro-Israel activism.

Critics of AIPAC and its campus affiliates assert that the organization’s stance ignores the oppression of Palestinians caused by the Israeli government. Furthermore, AIPAC is the most influential pro-Israel lobbying power in Washington. Students critical of Israeli government policies oppose AIPAC’s actions on Capitol Hill because they result in congressional support of Israel (regardless of its current government or politics), both through American taxpayer dollars and political backing on the international stage.

AIPAC has also been targeted by antisemitic conspiracy theorists who claim that the group is the mechanism by which Jews financially and politically manipulate American policy, and AIPAC student affiliate groups may be viewed similarly in campus context.



Annual AIPAC conference, D.C., 2019

Boycott, Divestment, & Sanctions (BDS)



The Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement (BDS) began in 2005, when Palestinian civil society, including unions, refugee networks, and womens organizations, called for BDS as a form of non-violent pressure on Israel. The BDS movement describes Israel as an apartheid, settler-colonial state.⁷⁷ Modeled on the 1980s South African anti-apartheid movement, BDS calls for the boycott, divestment, and sanctions of the Israeli state and Israeli companies until the following demands are met: end the occupation of Palestine, grant equal rights to Arab-Palestinians, and grant Palestinian refugees the right to return to their homes.

What are boycotts, divestments, & sanctions?

***Individual boycotts:** withdrawing support from Israeli institutions and Israeli and international companies engaged in violation of Palestinian human rights.*

***Institutional divestments:** urging banks, councils, churches, pension funds, universities, and businesses to withdraw investments from the state of Israel and all Israeli international companies supporting the violation of Palestinian human rights.*

***Government sanctions:** pressuring governments not to aid or assist the Israeli government by banning business with Israeli settlements, ending military trade agreements, and suspending Israel's membership in international forums like the UN.*

Campus BDS activists organize campaigns asking their universities to withdraw financial holdings from companies complicit in Israel's actions in Gaza and the West Bank. From 2005 to 2021, 147 BDS measures have been proposed to universities, and 96 were defeated.⁷⁸ However, in cases when student governments have passed divestment resolutions, the president, chancellor, or board of trustees have usually refused to implement it. Some campus divestment campaigns are only modeled on BDS, and do not list the same demands as the BDS movement writ-large. These “BDS-inspired” campaigns typically do not focus on political solutions, but rather on human rights concerns in occupied territories and university investments.

The BDS movement describes Zionism as “the racist ideology of late 19th-century European colonialism.” The movement states, "Zionism claims that all people worldwide who identify themselves as Jewish belong to a 'Jewish nation,' although these people are citizens of many countries, and that this 'nation' has an inherent right to a 'Jewish state' in Palestine, despite the presence of the indigenous Palestinian population."⁷⁹ Critics of BDS view this denial of Jewish nationhood as a rejection of Jewish identity, history, and right to self-determination.

While the BDS movement officially disavows antisemitism, and some Jews support the movement, many Jews perceive BDS nationally (and its affiliated campus campaigns) as perpetuating and promoting anti-Jewish hate. Critics also assert that the BDS movement categorically denies the legitimacy and reality of the Jewish state.

Here’s an example of BDS-turned-antisemitism from Brown University’s 2019 BDS-inspired campaign, “Brown Divest.” In the context of the campaign, a student posted the following on an anonymous Facebook discussion board.

I often hear the argument “Israel is the only Jewish state so it needs to exist.” As if each religion deserves its own state. Clearly you guys couldn’t handle running a state without turning it into the most oppressive country in the Middle East. It’s time to give the land back to its rightful people. #divest

This anonymous writer conflates Jews (“you guys”) with the Israeli government (“running a state”). Doing so shifts their #divest to imply not only opposition to Israel, but also opposition to Jews. While Brown Divest officially condemned this post, it exemplifies how conversations during BDS campaigns can slip into antisemitism.



BROWN DIVEST REFERENDUM:

Should the Brown University administration divest all stocks, funds, endowment, and other monetary instruments from companies complicit in human rights abuses in Palestine and establish a means of implementing financial transparency and student oversight of the University’s investments?

OP-EDS, OPINIONS

██████████ '19, ██████████ '19, ██████████ '19,
██████████ '20: A Jewish case for Brown Divest

By ██████████ and ██████████
OP-ED CONTRIBUTORS
Wednesday, March 20, 2019

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR, OPINIONS

Letter: A Jewish case against Brown Divest

By ██████████ and ██████████
Thursday, March 21, 2019

Referendum and school paper headlines, Brown University BDS-inspired campaign, 2019

J Street U Campus Affiliates



J Street is an umbrella activist organization that describes itself as “the political home for pro-Israel, pro-peace Americans,” and broadly supports a **two-state solution** in Israel/Palestine.⁸⁰ The student organizing arm of J Street is known as J Street U, and has campus affiliates on nearly 50 college campuses across the country. J Street U is run by an international staff and student board, and offers fellowship opportunities for students seeking to promote

their mission on American college campuses. The organization describes their mission as consisting of “advocating and educating in colleges and universities, in our communities and on Capitol Hill for vigorous and sustained American leadership in facilitating a negotiated, two-state resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.”⁸¹ J Street U acknowledges and advocates for Palestinian statehood, defending “the right of both the Jewish and Palestinian peoples to sovereignty and security in democratic, self-governing states.”⁸² The movement explicitly condemns the Israeli occupation and settlement of the Palestinian territories.

Critics on the right charge J Street and its campus affiliates with deligitimizing Israel, while critics on the left claim that simultaneous Jewish and Palestinian self-determination in the area is impossible, and that the J Street political platform is too idealistic and naive to become a reality.

#ChangeThePlatform

We're fighting to make sure the 2020 Democratic Platform acknowledges America's commitment to Israeli security AND Palestinian rights.

Let Our People Know

In 2019, J Street U worked to end the erasure of Palestinian voices on organized trips to Israel

Stop Demolitions Build Peace

J Street U helped raise global awareness about the threat of demolition facing Palestinian communities and the role demolitions play in the process of creeping annexation.

Some of J Street U's recent campaigns

Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP)



Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) is a national grassroots organization with a platform based on “peace, social justice, and human rights”⁸³ and a commitment to “secure a common future where Palestinians, Israeli Jews, and all the people of Israel/Palestine may live with dignity, security, and peace.”⁸⁴ Among their goals is to end the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem and blockade of Gaza, as well as achieve self-determination for Israelis and Palestinians. In addition to

legislative advocacy campaigns, arts and culture programs, a Rabbinical Council, and Open Synagogue Network, JVP has campus chapters across the U.S. guided by an Academic Advisory Council of faculty. Since its founding in the mid-1990s, JVP has gained over 200,000 online supporters and established over 70 chapters in the U.S.

JVP defines itself as anti-Zionist, describing Zionism as a nineteenth-century political ideology that emerged in response to Jewish persecution in Christian Europe. In their statement on Zionism, JVP writes, “Zionism was a false and failed answer to the desperately real question many of our ancestors faced of how to protect Jewish lives from murderous antisemitism in Europe... Zionism, in practice, has resulted in massacres of Palestinian people.”⁸⁵ JVP publicly subscribes to the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement platform.



JVP demonstration, Washington, 2014

Despite the organization’s larger stance on peace and security, critics of JVP accuse the movement of unfairly demonizing Israel and Zionism, providing a one-sided narrative of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and lacking a convincing vision for Jewish safety. Some Jewish students who have participated in JVP feel as though there was an implicit requirement that they extract Zionism and Israel from their Jewish identity. Because Zionism is firmly rooted in Jewish religion, history, and culture, expecting this extraction can constitute an evisceration of Jewish identity (see “Excising Zionism & Israel” p.70) and positions only anti-Zionist Jews as “good Jews.” Other Jewish students experience JVP as a critical space that aligns with their values, where they can express their full Jewish selves and build community with like-minded Jews, free of the exclusion they have felt in institutional Jewish spaces where support for Israel is experienced as the norm.

Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP)



Established in 2001, Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) is a national network of college students seeking to promote Palestinian liberation and solidarity. SJP is aimed at “elevat[ing] the student Palestine solidarity organizations network to a deeper level of political engagement” through community-building, political education and training, resource development, and connecting students to more global organizations fighting for Palestinian liberation.⁸⁶ SJP supports over 200 Palestine solidarity organizations across the U.S. and Canada. Among their values is to “fight against white supremacy, Zionism, antisemitism.”⁸⁷ SJP publicly subscribes to the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) platform.

Despite the organization’s larger stance on antisemitism, individual members and chapters of SJP have been accused of unfairly demonizing Jewish students who identify as Zionists, going beyond simply opposing their political stances on Israel. Some Jewish students who have participated in SJP events feel there is an implicit requirement that they extract Zionism and Israel from their Jewish identity, while other Jewish students feel that their Jewish identity is fully consistent with their participation in SJP. Because Zionism is firmly rooted in Jewish religion, history, and culture, expecting this nullification can constitute an evisceration of Jewish identity (see “Excising Zionism & Israel” p.70). At the same time, asserting that Jews who participate in SJP and other similar anti-Zionist student groups are “bad Jews” is equally problematic (see “The Good Jew, Bad Jew Phenomenon” p.72).



Tufts SJP demonstration, Boston, 2020

2021 - [Seattle University](#) (calls on the university to stand in solidarity against the unjust treatment of Palestinians and reexamine its investment portfolio and divest from companies complicit in human rights and international law violations) 2021 - [Northwestern University](#) (calls on university to issue a solidarity statement for Palestinian and Muslim students)

2020 - [Columbia University](#) (BDS referendum)
2020 - [Fresno State University](#) (divestment resolution)
2020 - [University of Illinois- Urbana Champagne](#) (divestment resolution)
2020 - [Tufts University](#) (referendum ending deadly exchange with Israel)

2019 - [New York University](#) (academic boycott)
2019 - [Swarthmore College](#) (divestment)
2019 - [Occidental College](#) (divestment)
2019 - [Brown University](#) (divestment referendum)
2019 - [Pitzer College](#) (academic boycott resolution); vetoed by university president
2019 - [Williams' College](#) (academic boycott against establishment of Zionist student organization)
2019 - [Brown University](#) (advisory committee divestment)**
2019 - [Columbia University](#) (divestment resolution)

Recent BDS victories as listed on National SJP's website

How Zionism & Israel Impact Jews on Campus

American universities are often politically-charged and polarized when it comes to Zionism, anti-Zionism, Israel, and Palestine. As a result, Jewish students frequently find themselves accepted in certain communities, both Jewish and non-Jewish, and excluded from others based on their stances – perceived, explicit, or lack thereof – regarding Zionism and/or Israel. When this happens, Jewish students are generally made to feel like a “good Jew” in some places, and a “bad Jew” in others, no matter their politics (see “The Good Jew, Bad Jew Phenomenon” p.72). Yet, Jewish students’ involvement with activism or Jewish life on campus should not be compromised by their politics, or lack thereof, surrounding Zionism and/or Israel.

*"There are **some Jews for whom Israel is part of their core identity**, and they have a mission to defend it against those who would defame or slander it, just as (or perhaps more fervently than) if someone maligned the Jewish religion. But **there are Jews whose identity is more informed by their religion's call to repair the world and to do good**. They may see this mandate as **inconsistent with staying silent** as Israel's occupation of the West Bank and significant control over Gaza are now over half a century old."*

Author Kenneth Stern, "The Conflict Over the Conflict"⁸⁸

That being said, accountability is important. Jews are not exempt from charges of bigotry when it comes to how they express their views regarding Israel and/or Zionism. Progressive spaces may legitimately interrogate those attitudes if they appear to be inconsistent with the missions of their movements. They should be careful, however, not to ask Jewish students to justify, explain, or defend their stance on Zionism simply because they have a relationship

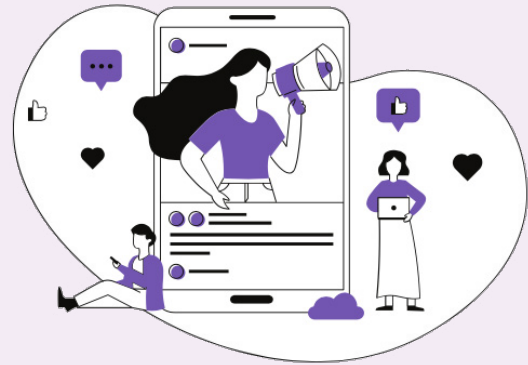
with Israel, if non-Jewish students are not similarly questioned about personal stances on issues related to their identity.

We want to encourage our readers to avoid broad generalizations. We should neither malign Jews by making assumptions about their relationship to Zionism/Israel, nor assume that Jews are beyond reproach when it comes to their stances on Zionism and Israel. We want to emphasize the importance of critical, intentional engagement with any stances we uphold. (see "Considerations for Zionists and Anti-Zionists" p.56).

Is This Social Media Post Antisemitic?

Social Media Activism

Social media activism – which uses social media technology as a tool for promoting change – has skyrocketed over the past few years. The public, uncensored domains of sites like Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter enable anyone and everyone to spread information and promote causes they believe in. On one hand, this development is productive because it enables people around the world to escape the restrictions of mass media and make their voices heard. On the other hand, it can also quickly lead to the spread of misinformation and prejudice, providing a platform for even the most uninterrogated and bigoted stances to reach millions of people. In addition, social media posts are designed to be convenient, quick, and easy to read: Twitter limits posts to 280 characters, and Instagram limits posts to include no more than ten slides of information. Hence, while posts on social media can certainly get important ideas across, it's incredibly difficult for them to convey social, cultural, and political issues in a comprehensive, nuanced way. At the same time, algorithms on these sites filter and promote content based on views, likes, and comments rather than validity, often disseminating harmful content simply because people view and respond to it. Because of all of these factors, it is difficult to engage responsibly with important issues on social media, and antisemitism is no exception. But it is not impossible. In the following section, we will examine some social media content to parse out what we believe to be productive and unproductive representations of ideas relating to antisemitism online.



As increasing numbers of individuals, celebrities, politicians, and companies turn to their platforms on social media to support different causes, it is important to have the tools to be able to determine what information is worth heeding. While this section is specifically intended to show how to avoid antisemitism on social media, we strongly advise our readers to always go beyond whatever posts they see by doing further research. No issue can be totally understood by simply looking over a post or two (or even this guidebook alone).

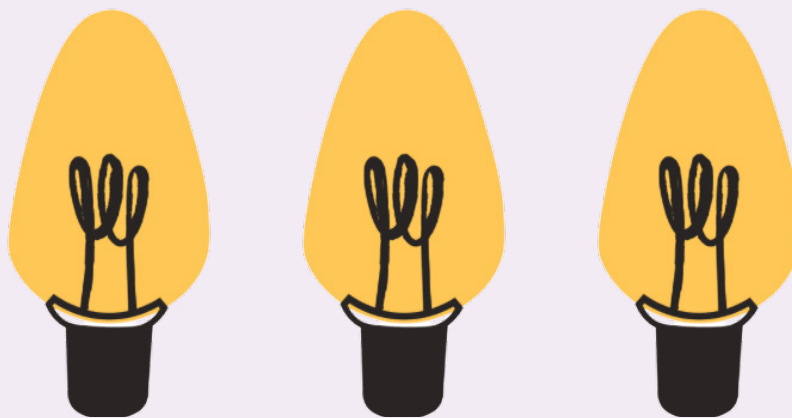
Sample Posts



In this section, we will attempt to model for our readers some ways to apply the learning from this book. We will categorize a selection of social media posts into three categories based on how we think they handle content related to Judaism, Israel/Palestine, Zionism, and antisemitism: a green light indicates responsible engagement, a yellow light indicates irresponsible engagement, and a red light indicates that the post is antisemitic. To receive a green light, a post must neither contain antisemitic rhetoric nor essentialize people based on their identities, and it must maintain respect for Jewish history and the legacy of antisemitism. We chose this model because we believe the issues at hand are too complicated to be assessed in black and white. We have elected to omit the names of authors of the posts included, but have provided relevant information about their platforms and identities.

A Note on "Yellow Lights"

In the process of analyzing the following posts, we assumed positive intentions from authors receiving yellow lights. However, we also addressed each post with a critical eye, looking out for any potential arguments for how their content mishandles issues relating to antisemitism. In most cases, posts receiving a yellow light could receive a green light by incorporating more nuance or careful language. While often the most difficult to confront, yellow light posts – instances where the presence of antisemitism or problematic rhetoric can be legitimately debated – are important learning tools. For this reason, this section includes more yellow light posts than red or green light posts.





Green light

Responsible engagement with Judaism, Israel/Palestine, Zionism, and antisemitism.



Yellow light

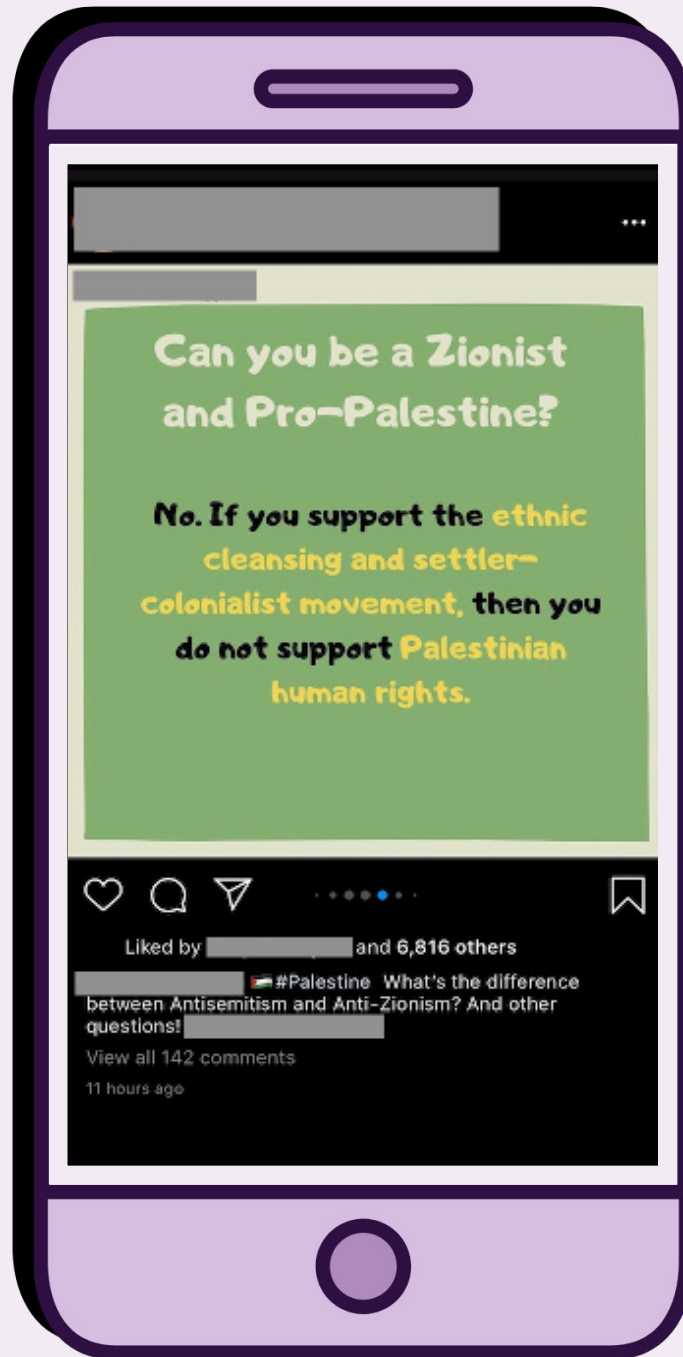
Irresponsible engagement with Judaism, Israel/Palestine, Zionism, and antisemitism.



Red light

Outright antisemitism.

Post #1



Yellow light

This infographic was posted on Instagram in 2021 by a Palestinian activist organization with 2.4 million followers.

This post receives a *yellow light* because it essentializes Zionism. The post correctly identifies the settler-colonial impact of Political Zionism on Palestinian communities, yet incorrectly states that all Zionists support Palestinian ethnic cleansing. Many Zionists outwardly oppose the impacts of the state of Israel on Palestinian life and advocate for Palestinian liberation, even as they remain committed to Jewish self-determination in Israel (see "Considerations for Zionists and Anti-Zionists" p.56). Yet, this post paints Zionism in one broad stroke, ignoring the diversity of beliefs held by Zionists regarding Jews, Palestinians, and the state of Israel.

Zionism as the dream of Jewish liberation in the biblical land of Israel is religiously and historically rooted in Judaism (see "Religious Roots" p.47, and "Why Israel Matters to Jews Today" p.65). With this in mind, asserting that Zionism equals ethnic cleansing means that Jews who see Zionism as integral to their Jewish identity are implicated in ethnic cleansing as a product of their Jewishness (see "Excising Zionism & Israel" p.70). Continually, requiring Jews to amputate Zionism from their identity in order to advocate for a cause they believe in, like the fight for Palestinian justice, is unfair at best and antisemitic at worst (see "The Good Jew, Bad Jew Phenomenon" p.72).



Post #2



Red light

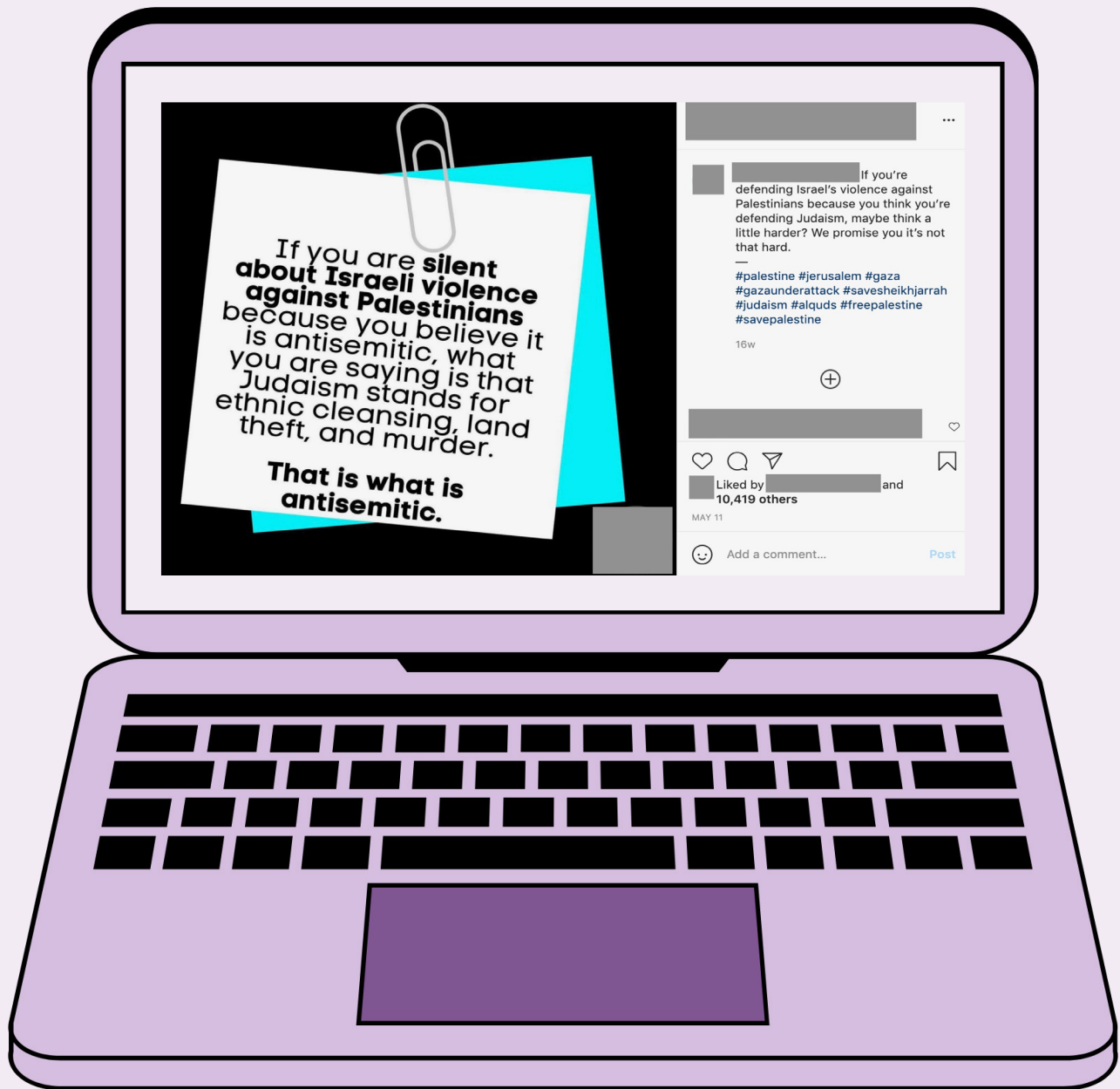
This statement was posted on Twitter in 2020 by a barrister who works for a British human rights legal chamber with about 3,000 followers.

This post receives a *red light* because it essentializes Zionism and contains antisemitic rhetoric. The post unequivocally categorizes Zionism as “a kind of racism” that is “essentially colonial,” claiming that Zionism is problematic at its core, rather than critiquing particular aspects of Zionism. In addition, Zionism is understood by many Jews as the dream of Jewish liberation in the biblical land of Israel and, as an ideology, is religiously and historically entrenched in Judaism (see “Religious Roots” p.47, and “Why Israel Matters to Jews Today” p.65). Requiring Jews to amputate Zionism from their identity in order to fight for a racial justice may also mean requiring them to alter their Jewish identity to become more palatable (see “The Good Jew, Bad Jew Phenomenon” p.72).

Furthermore, the author’s use of quotation marks around “the Jewish state” push it from a yellow light to a red light. These quotation marks, in conjunction with the phrase “calling itself,” imply that Israel’s self-identification as a Jewish state is merely a marketing ploy to cover up its true racist and colonial intentions. It cannot be discounted that the creation of the state of Israel as a Jewish homeland has involved the racist treatment and colonial displacement of Palestinian people. These ongoing means of accomplishing the end goal of Jewish autonomy and safety are inexcusable. However, asserting that all Jews who worked to establish the state of Israel, and all Zionists today, sought *only* to oppress Palestinians, is antisemitic. Such a statement delegitimizes the dire need for safety that many Jews felt and still feel around the world, creating an untrue conspiracy surrounding the purpose of the Israeli state. Although many people may legitimately believe that Israel’s existence as a Jewish state is not justified, *it is an unavoidable fact that it does exist*. Calling Israel the Jewish state is not a cover-up or justification for its problematic policies, as this post implies, but rather a statement of truth.



Post #3



Green light

This image was posted on Instagram by a Palestinian advocacy organization based in the U.S. with 47,300 followers.

There is a lot to unpack in this post. For clarity's sake, here is our fleshed-out translation of what it is saying:

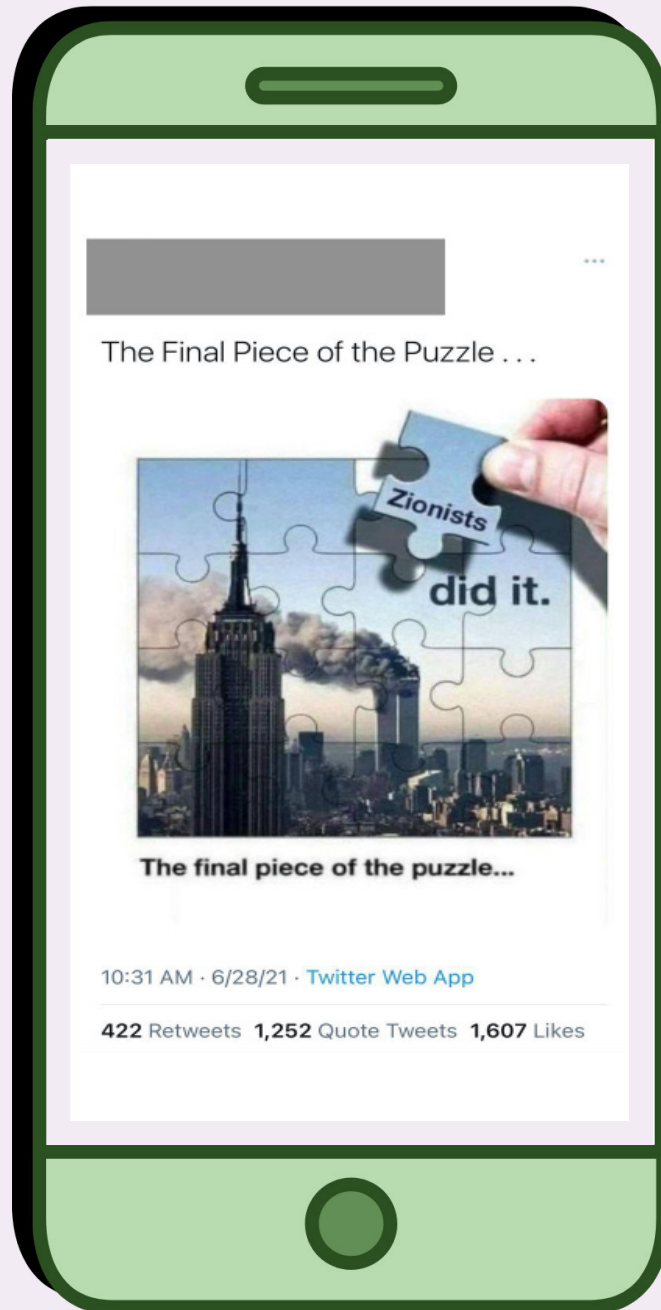
If you are silent about Israeli violence against Palestinians because you believe speaking out against Israeli violence is anti-Judaism, you imply that Judaism stands for violence against Palestinians. That implication, rather than speaking out, is antisemitic.

Feel free to read that a few more times. We had to as well.

This post receives a **green light** because it avoids essentialization, drawing a clear boundary between Judaism and the actions of Israel as a state. In doing so, the post affirms that speaking out against Israeli treatment of Palestinians is not antisemitic, or anti-Jewish. This post addresses Israeli policies, namely violence towards Palestinians, but does not problematize everyone with a relationship to the state of Israel. We have noted that Israel is a relevant part of Judaism, and many Jews do have personal connections to Israel (see “Why Israel Matters to Jews Today” p.65, “Abstracting Zionism & Israel” p.72, and “Excising Zionism & Israel” p.70). By clearly demarcating the state of Israel as distinct from Judaism, the authors of this post make space to criticize Israeli policies without delegitimizing Jewish religion, culture, and history in the land, successfully avoiding antisemitism while criticizing Israel.



Post #4



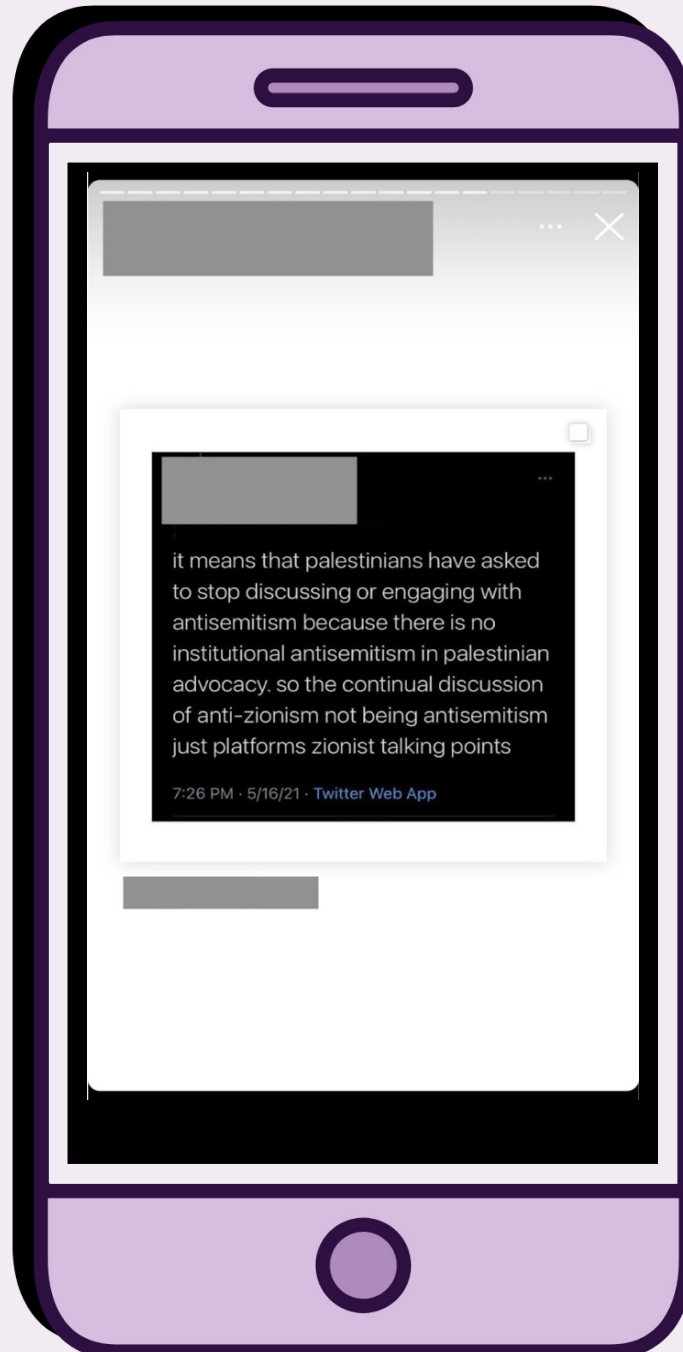
Red light

This image was posted on Twitter in 2021 by a six-time Democratic member of the U.S. House of Representatives with 47.2 thousand followers.

This post receives a *red light* because it contains blatantly antisemitic rhetoric, using the word "Zionist" to shroud a classic antisemitic trope. The post contains an image of the terrorist attacks on the U.S. on September 11, 2001, known as 9/11, and insinuates that Zionists are "the final piece of the puzzle" responsible for the disastrous event. There is no relationship between Zionism and the 9/11 terrorist attacks, a fact which illustrates that the author of this post is using the word Zionist as code for Jew (claiming that "Jews did 9/11" is a well-known conspiracy theory). The post's ultimate message draws upon the antisemitic stereotype of Jews as evil puppeteers who orchestrate global catastrophes (see "Political/Economic Antisemitism" p.24). This post demonstrates how using the word "Zionist" instead of Jew can function as a mechanism to thinly veil antisemitic statements.



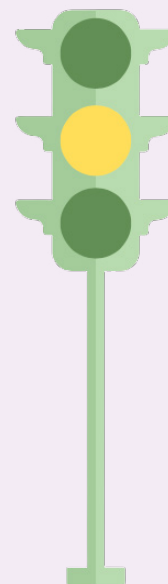
Post #5



Yellow light

This text was posted on Instagram in 2021 by an American university student involved in campus pro-Palestinian activism with over 800 followers. It is excerpted from a multi-slide post, hence it begins mid-sentence.

This post receives a *yellow light* because it does not respect the legacy of antisemitism and alludes to antisemitic conspiracy theory. The post wholly dismisses Jewish concerns of antisemitism and insinuates that these concerns are merely breached in order to elevate the Zionist cause. The Palestinian liberation struggle is not, at its core, antisemitic, but many politicians and organizations maintain unrealistically low thresholds for what they consider antisemitism, and these frequent cries of antisemitism are often perceived as mechanisms for disrupting pro-Palestinian activism. That being said, this post wrongly dismisses the possibility of antisemitism in Palestinian justice movements across the board. Accordingly, it silences Jews – including those who are Palestinian allies – trying to express valid discomfort. The assumption that Jews expressing concerns of antisemitism are solely seeking to advance political agendas, or “Zionist talking points,” is in line with traditionally antisemitic conspiracy theories which portray Jews as malicious political manipulators (see "Political/Economic Antisemitism" p.24).



Post #6



Yellow light

This image was posted on Instagram in 2019 by an organizer of a BDS-inspired campaign on a U.S. college campus with over 800 followers.

This post receives a *yellow light* because it disrespects Jewish history and the legacy of antisemitism. The post irresponsibly invokes the history of the Holocaust by employing imagery of Nazi Germany to portray the Jewish state. The Holocaust, carried out by Hitler's Nazi regime, was one of the darkest chapters in Jewish history, and harnessing the trauma involved in this event to portray the Jewish state is insensitive at best, and antisemitic at worst.

Israel has repeatedly violated international law and inflicted violence upon Palestinians, and has often avoided direct punishment on the international stage for these actions. Some believe these legal transgressions should be addressed in the manner of the international military tribunals held in Nuremberg following WWII. This post, however, puts the Jewish state directly in the seats of those responsible for one of the most horrific moments in Jews' history. As a result, it irresponsibly and insensitively abuses the history of the Holocaust and the resulting Jewish collective trauma.

That being said, many Jews do see the legacy of the Holocaust as a critical educational tool for preventing future genocides of marginalized communities and combatting injustice of all kinds. To see some examples of responsible invocations of Holocaust history as a learning device, we recommend the National Holocaust Memorial Museum's [page on genocide prevention](#), and Massachusetts-based educational organization, [Facing History & Ourselves](#).



Post #7



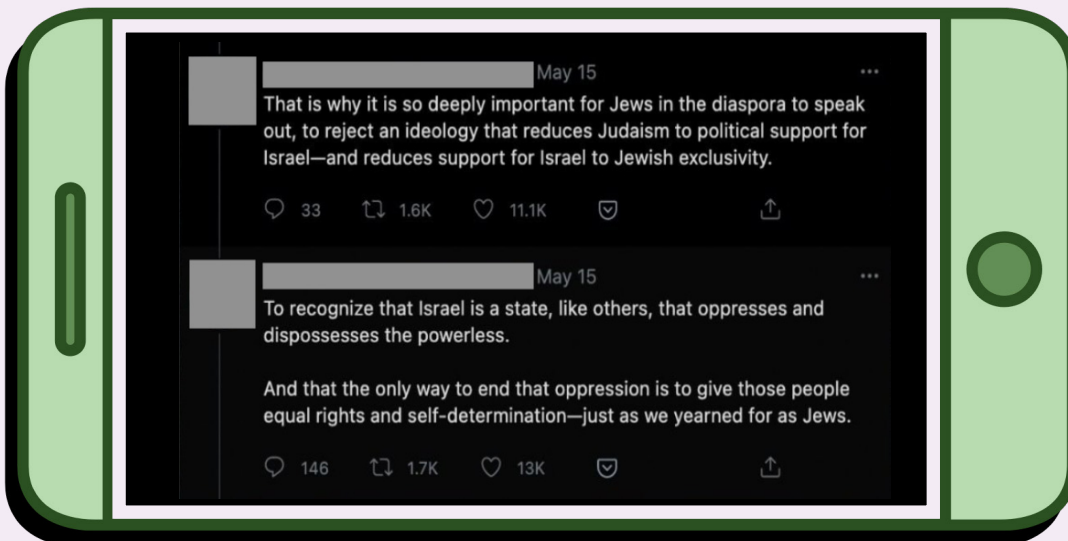
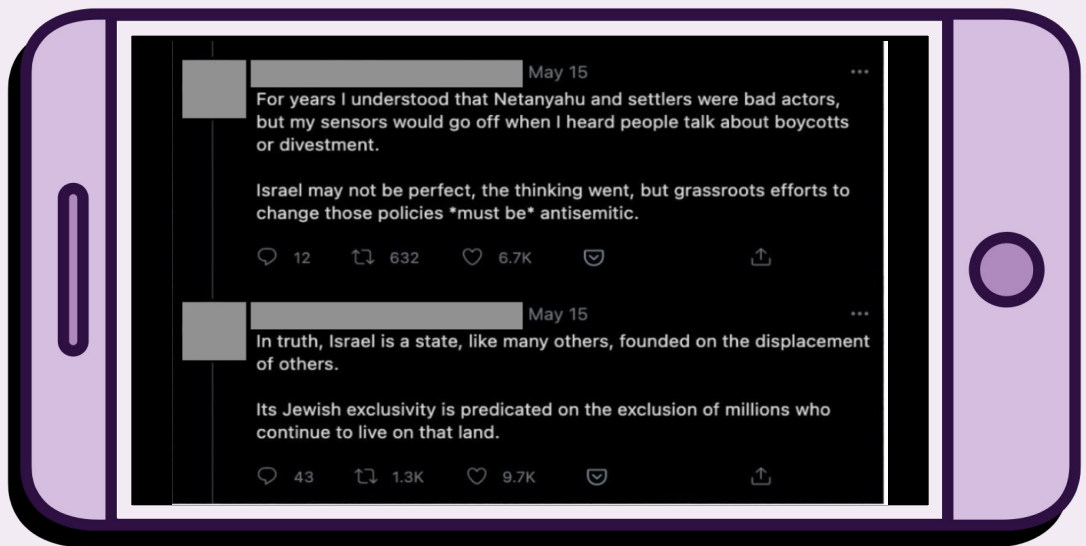
Yellow light

This slide was posted on Instagram in 2021 by a Jewish activist with 10.6 thousand followers.

This post receives a *yellow light* for disrespecting Jewish history and the legacy of antisemitism. In fact, the post utilizes the legacy of antisemitism to undermine Palestinian activism, an action which contradicts one of this guidebook's primary objectives. This infographic was posted following the escalation of armed conflict between the Israeli army (Israeli Defence Forces, or IDF) and Palestinian militant organizations in Gaza in May of 2021. These events coincided with numerous Palestinian solidarity demonstrations, significant media attention, and an increase in isolated antisemitic attacks around the world.⁸⁹ Nevertheless, the way this post conflates these events with the Holocaust is problematic. Though the explosion of anti-Jewish hate crimes during this period cannot be discounted, comparing individual acts of antisemitic violence and unrelated Palestinian activism with a state-coordinated genocide makes light of one of the most traumatic events in Jewish history. Beyond this, by asserting that pro-Palestinian activists are “anti-Jewish,” the author of this post unfairly characterizes beliefs in Palestinian autonomy as antisemitic, ultimately excluding Jews from participating in the Palestinian justice movement (see “The Good Jew, Bad Jew Phenomenon” p.72).



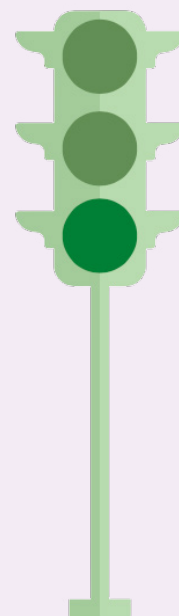
Post #8



Green light

These statements were posted on Twitter in 2021 by a Jewish communications and strategy advisor to a Democratic U.S. representative, and were later re-posted on Instagram by a pro-Palestinian activism organization with 41.1 thousand followers.

This post receives a *green light* because it avoids essentialization, leaving room for the plurality of Jewish identity and relationships to the state of Israel. In doing so, the author of this post avoids criticizing what is often a significant component of Jewish identity (see “Why Israel Matters to Jews Today” and “Excising Zionism & Israel” pgs. 65 and 70). This author also correctly points out that supporting Israel does not absolve individuals of antisemitism, a successful demonstration of holding people accountable when it comes to Judaism, Zionism, Israel/Palestine, and antisemitism (see "Considerations for Zionists and Anti-Zionists" p.56).



Now What?

Put it all to use!

You've learned how to identify, confront, and unpack the hows, whys, and whats of antisemitism. And, hopefully, you've confronted some of our own blindspots when it comes to antisemitism by thinking critically about your own assumptions and beliefs.

Now, it's time to talk and talk some more! We believe that antisemitism can only be successfully tackled through a combination of education and relationships, and you already started the first part by reading this book. Next time you get into a conversation about any of these topics, remember to use all of the knowledge you've just acquired in order to:

Take steps to think critically and compassionately about others' opinions and beliefs.

Complicate reductive understandings of antisemitism, Judaism, and Zionism by bringing them into their historical, theoretical, and personal contexts.

Challenge people's preconceptions by asking them to interrogate the sources and implications of their beliefs and prompting them to do the same for others.

Take seriously the needs of both Palestinians and Jews for freedom, safety, and justice when consuming media about and engaging in activism around Israel and/or Palestine.

Continue to learn about these issues with a willingness to interrogate sources from multiple perspectives, even the ones you don't agree with.

So, grab a friend, a relative, a classmate, a stranger, and see what they think. And, report back to us – we're still learning, too! Contact us at narrowbridgeproject@brown.edu. The only way we can work through antisemitism and achieve collective liberation is if we do it together.

Glossary

Please Note: we have only included terms that were not explained in equal or more depth in the text of the guidebook itself. If you are confused about a term that is not listed here, we recommend you check the table of contents to see whether there is a section dedicated to the topic (see "Contents" p.4). Otherwise, we recommend [Encyclopaedia Britannica](#) and [Encyclopaedia Judaica](#) for further explanation.

Aliyah (n.) - Pronounced *ah-lee-yah*, Hebrew for "ascent," plural *Aliyot* or *Aliyahs*. Refers to the immigration of Diasporic Jews to the state of Israel. The pre-state waves of Jewish immigration to Palestine that began as a result of the Zionist movement are historically known as numbered *aliyot*. The First *Aliyah* was between 1882 and 1903 to Ottoman Palestine, and the Fifth *Aliyah* was between 1929 and 1939 to British Palestine. Today, "making *aliyah*" describes a Jew moving to Israel and claiming citizenship.

Alt-Right (n.) - An abbreviation of "alternative right," the alt-right is a far-right, white nationalist ideological movement that opposes mainstream politics and notions of equality that "threaten" white supremacy. The alt-right originated in the United States in the early 2010s, and still primarily exists in America. The alt-right is characterized by its online presence, largely using media to disseminate its content.

Annexation (n.) - A state's formal claim of sovereignty over a territory,

usually achieved by force and conquest, and often following military occupation. Annexation is generally considered illegal by international bodies.

Antisemitism (n.) - An umbrella term that refers to the hatred of and/or discrimination against Jewish people.

Anti-Zionism (n.) - Opposition to some form of Zionism. (see "What is Zionism" p.46).

Arab (adj.) - Describing any Arabic-speaking person, regardless of religion or ethnicity, from the vast region from Mauritania, on the Atlantic coast of Africa, to southwestern Iran, including the entire Maghreb of North Africa, Egypt, Sudan, the Arabian Peninsula, Syria and Iraq.

Ashkenazi (adj.) - Referring to a Jewish person of Eastern European descent. The majority of American Jews are Ashkenazi Jews.

Assimilation (n.) - More specifically, "cultural assimilation," the process by which a minority group takes on the

values, behaviors, beliefs, and general culture of the dominant group in their society, losing part or all of their original and distinct cultural identity.

Biblical Land of Israel (n.) - The ancestral homeland of the Jewish people, which spans roughly from the Mediterranean Sea in the west to the Jordan River in the east.

Blockade, Gaza (n.) - The Israeli government's military control of the humans and resources entering and exiting the region, which began when Israel conquered, yet did not annex, Gaza during the 1967 war, and continued after Israel formally ended its occupation of Gaza 2005.

Civil Rights Movement (n.) - The struggle for justice for Black Americans during the 1950s and 1960s, predicated on decades of discrimination and segregation. The Civil Rights Movement primarily used nonviolent resistance and civil disobedience as protest tactics to achieve major legislative gains, namely the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which banned racial discrimination.

Conditional Whiteness (n.) - The post-WWII process by which American society afforded Ashkenazi Jews the benefits of whiteness as long as they sufficiently hid their Jewishness.

Conservative/Masorti Judaism (n.) - Known as Conservative Judaism within

North America and Masorti Judaism everywhere else, a Jewish religious movement that began in the 19th century in response to the liberalizing tendencies of the Reform movement. Conservative/Masorti Judaism seeks to “conserve” elements of traditional Judaism while incorporating elements of modernity, such as gender equality. Conservative/Masorti Judaism can be thought of as a middle ground between Reform and Orthodox Judaism.

Conspiracy Theory (n.) - The explanation for an event as the result of a secret plot by sinister and purportedly powerful groups. The term has a negative connotation.

Cultural/Secular Judaism (n.) - Cultural or secular Jews identify not with Judaism as a religion, but rather as a culture. Cultural or secular Jews are non-religious, but still feel connected to Judaism's literary, artistic, culinary, moral, philosophical, and even scientific achievements.

Dual Loyalty (n.) - Loyalty to two separate, often conflicting, entities. Dual loyalty is a commonly-applied antisemitic trope, charging that Jews are not trustworthy citizens in the countries where they reside.

Diaspora (n.) - Rooted in the ancient Greek word for “scattering,” the global dispersion of the Jewish community that results from historical exiles, and

characterizes Jewish cultural, religious, and political identity today. Diaspora can also broadly refer to any population scattered around the world and no longer inhabiting its ancestral homeland.

Eugenics (n.) - A pseudo-scientific field that emerged in the U.S. in the late-19th and early 20th-century, based on the idea of genetically superior and inferior races and the desire to create a “genetically pure” society. The American eugenics movement saw minority groups, such as Black people, disabled people, immigrants, and Jewish people as threats to mainstream whiteness. Practices like forced sterilization and contraception campaigns were imposed upon these groups. Nazi antisemitism was largely based on American eugenics movements.

Ethnic Cleansing (n.) - The attempt to create an ethnically homogenous geographic area by expelling and/or massacring unwanted national, ethnic, racial and/or religious groups. Ethnic cleansing is deemed a crime against humanity by the International Criminal Court (ICC), and listed as a subsection of genocide by the United Nations.

Genocide (n.) - The United Nations Genocide Convention defines genocide as “any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or

mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the groups conditions of life, calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; [and] forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.” Genocide is an internationally recognized crime.

Ghetto (n.) - A part of a city in which a minority group lives, usually as a result of social, legal, or economic pressure. The term originated in Renaissance Italy when Pope Paul IV implemented the first Jewish ghetto system, requiring Jewish communities to live in walled-off, economically sanctioned neighborhoods. During WWII, the German government re-established the Jewish ghetto system, forming thousands of ghettos across Eastern Europe to segregate, persecute, terrorize, and exploiting Jews.

Hebrew (n.) - Shorthand for (1) Biblical Hebrew, the ancient Semitic language spoken by the ancient Israelites in which the Torah (sacred text of the Jews) is written (2) Modern Hebrew, the revived and modernized version of Biblical Hebrew which is the official language of the state of Israel (3) a Jewish person, usually on official documentation prior to the 21st century.

Holocaust (n.) - Holocaust is a word of Greek origin meaning “sacrifice by fire.” The term is used to describe the Nazi-

orchestrated genocide of the Jewish people during WWII between the years 1941 and 1945. The Holocaust was a genocide orchestrated by Adolf Hitler, the leader of the Nazi party in Germany. He called it the “Final Solution (to the Jewish Question).” During the Holocaust, Nazi Germany massacred over 6 million Jews, roughly two-thirds of Europe’s Jewish population at the time, and millions of other targeted victims from groups also considered “undesirable” like members of the LGBTQ+ community, people with disabilities, and other racial minorities. The genocide included pogroms, mass shootings, and concentration camps, where prisoners were worked to death or fatally poisoned in gas chambers. Approximately six million Jews were killed, and many descendants of survivors still carry this trauma.

Intersectional Justice (n.) - The concept that all forms of inequality – based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, class, etc. – reinforce one another, and thus injustices must be fought in conjunction. Read more at the [Center for Intersectional Justice](#).

Israel (n.) - Refers to the Jewish people writ-large, the biblical land of Israel, or the state of Israel. The Jewish patriarch Jacob was given this name, and his descendants were thus known as the “children of Israel,” later becoming the tribes, people, or nation of Israel.

Jews of Color (n.) - Jewish people who are not / don't present as white. 11% of American Jews identify as Jews of Color.

Judaism (n.) - The globally-dispersed, multi-ethnic culture of the Jewish people which is linked by a shared history, experience of diaspora, and a monotheistic religion. Judaism is the religion and / or culture of Jews, a people with a history, a religion, a language, and ties to a land. Judaism predates modern Western notions of “faith” and “ethnicity.”

Kristallnacht (n.) - German for “The Night of the Broken Glass,” a wave of violent pogroms that took place throughout Germany, Austria, and Sudetenland (part of Czechoslovakia) on November 9-10, 1938, when Nazis plundered and vandalized Jewish homes, schools, businesses, and synagogues, and killed nearly 100 innocent Jews. The name *Kristallnacht* comes from all of the glass shards littered on the streets.

Left/Left-Wing (n.) - Broadly, left-wing describes someone whose political stance prioritizes equality and progress. Sometimes used interchangeably with “liberal” or “progressive”

Mandate Palestine (n.) - The land conquered by Britain from the Ottoman Empire after WWI. Mandate Palestine existed until 1948, when the state of Israel declared its independence. The Mandate Palestine period was

characterized by constant conflict between Jews, Palestinians, and Britain.

Mizrahi (adj.) - Referring to Jews of Middle Eastern, North African, Central Asian, or Balkan descent, who coalesced as a group as a result of ending up in Israel. The longest continued Jewish communities in the world are Mizrahi. Most Israeli Jews are Mizrahi Jews.

Nationalism (n.) - The idea that a particular people or nation (group united by common descent, history, culture, or language) should have self-governance over its homeland and be free from outside interference.

Nazism; Nazi (n.) - Nazism is the ideology of the Nazi Party, a German political party active between 1920 and 1945 and led by Adolf Hitler. Nazism is a form of fascism based on eugenics, antisemitism, and anti-communism. Nazism sought to create an “Aryan master race” by exterminating Jewish, Slavic, disabled, LGBTQ+, and Black people, plus political opponents through the Holocaust. “Nazi” refers to members of the Nazi party or German soldiers in WWII.

Neo-Nazism; Neo-Nazi (n.) - Neo-Nazism refers to post-WWII movements that seek to revive Nazi ideology. Neo-Nazis promote white supremacy and borrow Nazi ideas of antisemitism, ultranationalism, racism, xenophobia, ableism, homophobia, and transphobia.

Nuremberg Laws (n.) - A set of racist, antisemitic laws enacted by the German Nazi regime on September 15, 1935. First, they enacted The Reich Citizenship Law, which limited German citizenship to “racially pure” Germans. Second, they enacted The Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor, which banned intermarriages and sexual relations between Jews and people of “German or related blood.”

Occupation, West Bank (n.) - Israel’s military conquest of and continued governance over the Palestinian territory in the West Bank, which began as a result of the 1967 war. The Israeli occupation is considered in violation of international human rights laws by bodies like Amnesty International.

Orthodox Judaism (n.) - A modern Jewish religious movement that adheres strictly to traditional Jewish law. Orthodox Jews are often recognizable by their appearance. Ultra-Orthodox (sometimes called Haredi or Hasidic) men wear black suits and hats and have long curls in front of their ears (*peot*), and women wear head coverings and dress modestly. Modern Orthodox Judaism is a subsection of Orthodox Judaism that synthesizes observance of Jewish law with life in the secular world.

Ottoman Empire (n.) - The empire that, at its height, controlled most of southeastern Europe, parts of the Middle East, Northern Africa, and

the Arabian Peninsula. The Ottoman Empire lasted from the 13th century to the end of WWI, when it dissolved into modern-day Turkey. The Ottoman Empire was an Islamic state but was known for its religious tolerance of its diverse citizens.

Palestine (n.) - The geographic region between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. Palestine is also used as shorthand for both Mandate Palestine and occupied/Palestinian Territories.

Pogrom (n.) - A violent riot, often state-sanctioned and aimed at the massacre or expulsion of Jews. Pogroms are most associated with the Russian Empire in the 19th century.

Proselytic Religion (n.) - A religion that anyone can convert to, regardless of familial descent. Judaism is a proselytic religion, but does not generally engage in actively recruiting converts.

Proto-Zionism (n.) - or Forerunner of Zionism, Hebrew: *Mevasrei ha-Tzionut*) - A term attributed to the ideas of individuals and groups who moved to Palestine from the late 18th and early 19th centuries in the hope of rejuvenating Jewish life before the formal launch of the Zionist movement in the 1890s. Unlike later Zionists they were traditional Jews (including students of the Ba'al Shem Tov and Vilna Gaon) and were not chiefly motivated by political aspirations or Jewish Statehood.

Racialize (v.) - To ascribe certain ethnic or racial identities to a group that did not previously identify itself as such.

Reconstructionist Judaism (n.) - A religious movement that developed as an offshoot of Conservative Judaism in the 1920s and that views Judaism as an evolving practice. Reconstructionist Judaism emphasizes the personal search for meaning over traditional law.

Reform Judaism (n.) - A religious movement that began in 19th-century Germany and prioritizes the ethics of Judaism over its traditional laws and practices, in order to adapt Judaism to contemporary socio-political landscapes. Reform Judaism emphasizes social justice and inclusivity.

Renewal Judaism (n.) - A trans-denominational religious movement that originated in North America in the 1960s and seeks to imbue Judaism with Jewish mysticism (Kabbalah and Hasidism) and meditative practice, drawn from both Judaism and other traditions. Renewal Judaism emphasizes egalitarianism and incorporates ecstatic practices, like song and dance, into ritual.

Right/Right-Wing (n.) - Broadly, right-wing describes someone whose political stance prioritizes order, tradition, and nationalism. Sometimes used interchangeably with “conservative.”

Right of Return, Palestinian (n.)

- The principle that the 7 million Palestinians (a number which includes approximately 700,000 original refugees plus their descendants) around the world have a right to return to properties within Israel/Palestine from which they or their predecessors were expelled or fled during the wars between 1947 and 1949, which Palestinians call the *Nakba*. The Israeli government does not currently acknowledge the Palestinian Right of Return. Many see this lack of acknowledgement in sharp contrast to Israel's liberal policies with regard to Jewish immigration, and the significant support the state offers to any who choose to make aliyah (claim Israeli citizenship and residency based on Jewish heritage). If the Right of Return were granted, however, Jews would no longer constitute a majority in the land of Israel.

Scapegoat (v.) - To unfairly, irrationally, and incorrectly assign blame to someone; (n.) - a person who is scapegoated

Secular (adj.) - Non-religious. Of or relating to the government, separate from a religious authority.

Sephardi (adj.) - Referring to a Jewish person of Spanish or Portuguese descent. Most Sephardi Jews were exiled from Spain and Portugal during the 1492 Spanish Inquisition and then dispersed around the world.

Settler-Colonialism (n.) - The process by which a people replaces an indigenous population by settling on their land. Settler-colonialism is a category of colonialism, which is the process by which a people subjugates and exploits another people.

Settlements, Israeli (n.) -

Communities established and inhabited by Jewish Israelis on territory designated for a future Palestinian state. Though the West Bank is under military occupation, Israeli settlements in the area are governed under Israeli civil law. The vast majority of international legal authorities (including the ICCJ) view the Israeli settlements as illegal under the Geneva Convention.

Star of David (n.) - Known in Hebrew as *Magen David*, "Shield of David," the hexagram shape that is generally known as the symbol of Judaism. The Star of David has been a means of Jewish self-identification, such as on the modern Israeli flag, as well as involuntary "othering" throughout history, such as the yellow patches sewn on Jews' clothes during the Holocaust.

Twelve Tribes of Israel (n.) -

According to the Hebrew Bible, the descendants of the patriarch Jacob who constituted the nation of the ancient Israelites.

Two-State Solution (n.) - A proposed solution to the conflict in Israel/

Palestine that would create two separate sovereign states in the land, one Palestinian and one Jewish. The exact borders of where these two states would be have been contested in various proposals throughout history. The most notable two-state solutions were the Partition Plan put forth in 1947 by the United Nations, and the failed agreement established during the Oslo Accords in the early 1990s.

United Nations (UN) (n.) - A global intergovernmental organization designed to maintain peace and security and facilitate international cooperation. The U.N. is considered the authority on humanitarian issues. The U.N. was established following WWII with the goal of preventing future wars, replacing the League of Nations. The U.N. is made up of six main bodies, including the General Assembly, Security Council, the International Court of Justice, and others, and includes many specialized agencies, funds, and programs, such as WHO and UNESCO. There are currently 193 member states of the U.N.

White Supremacy (n.) - The broad ideology which perceives white people ("white" being used here to exclude Jews) as a superior race that should dominate the economic, political, and social spheres of American society.

Whiteness (n.) - The socially-fabricated way in which white people, their customs, and beliefs operate as

the standard to which all others are compared. Whiteness in America has creates that treats nonwhite people as inferior or abnormal. As a result, white people receive certain advantages in U.S. society, known as white privilege. (see "What 'Whiteness' Means" p.39)

World Zionist Organization (n.) - The organization founded by Theodor Herzl at the Basel Conference in 1897 in order to set forth the Basel Program. The World Zionist Organization has established various institutions to accomplish its mission, such as the Jewish National Fund and the Jewish Agency, which functioned as a makeshift government during pre-state Israel. Today, the World Zionist Organization focuses on supporting Diaspora Jewry through education and youth programs.

Yishuv (n.) - The Jewish inhabitants of the state of Israel before it declared its independence in 1948. This collective set up much of the infrastructure that enabled Israel to succeed as a political entity, and is accordingly sometimes known as "the state before the state."

Zionism (n.) - A variety of ideologies that grew in the late-19th and early-20th centuries, all aimed toward the establishment of a Jewish homeland in the biblical land of Israel as a means of solving the political and cultural problems of the Jewish people in the modern world (see "What is Zionism" p.46).

Recommended Resources

“Who is wise? One who learns from every person.”

Pirkei Avot, Ethics of the Fathers, 4:1

We recommend asking yourself the following guiding questions as you read, courtesy of Encounter Programs.⁹⁰

What is my reaction?

What am I feeling as I read or listen? If I am feeling validated, supported, or vindicated – or defensive, uncomfortable, or angry – why might I be responding that way? What core beliefs make this perspective feel threatening or validating to me?

Where is the writer coming from?

What might the person whose words I’m reading be feeling as they wrote this? What is their lived experience that leads them to the conclusions they are making?

What am I curious about?

What can I learn from this perspective? What assumptions might I be making? What do I still not know? What more do I want to understand?

Articles

Ben Lorber, [Taking Aim at Multiracial Democracy: Antisemitism, White Nationalism, and Anti-Immigrant Racism in the Era of Trump](#)

Ben Lorber, [Zionism in Not 'Not Judaism'](#)

Blake Flayton, [On the Frontlines of Progressive Antisemitism](#)

Derek J. Penslar, [Is Zionism a Colonial Movement?](#)

Donniel Hartman, [Liberal Zionism and the Troubled Committed](#)

Edward Said, [Zionism from the Standpoint of its Victims](#)

Ella Shohat, [The Invention of the Mizrahim](#)

Ella Shohat, [Sephardim in Israel: Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Jewish Victims](#)

Eric Ward, [Skin in the Game: How Antisemitism Animates White Nationalism](#)

Jews of Color Initiative, [Beyond the Count: Perspectives and Lived Experiences of Jews of Color](#)

Jewish Currents Editors, [How Not to Fight Antisemitism](#)

Hanan Schlesinger, Six Unsettling Truths Laid Bare by the Present Violence
Jill Jacobs, How to Tell When Criticism of Israel is Actually Antisemitism
Michelle Dardashti, Redeeming Particularity
Natan Sharansky and Gil Troy, The Un-Jews: The Jewish Attempt to Cancel Israel and Jewish Peoplehood
Peter Beinart, Yavne: A Jewish Case for Equality in Israel-Palestine
Sami Sharit, Intra-Jewish Conflict in Israel: White Jews, Black Jews
Yehuda Kurtzer (in response to Beinart), Memory Malpractice: Peter Beinart, the Future of Israel, and the Meaning of Yavne
Yotam Marom, Toward the Next Jewish Rebellion

Books

that we're still reading too!

Abdel Monem Said Aly, Shai Feldman, and Khalil Shikaki, Arabs and Israelis: Conflict and Peacemaking in the Middle East
Arthur Hertzberg, The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader
Ari Shavit, My Promised Land
Bari Weiss, How to Fight Anti-Semitism
Eric L. Goldstein, The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity
Daniel Sokatch, Can We Talk About Israel?
David Nirenberg, Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition
Deborah E. Lipstadt, Antisemitism: Here and Now
Dmitry Shomsky, Beyond the Nation-State: The Zionist Political Imagination from Pinsker to Ben-Gurion
Ian Lustick, For The Land and the Lord: Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel
Karen Brodtkin, How Jews Became White Folks & What That Says About Race in America
Kenneth S. Stern, The Conflict Over the Conflict: The Israel/Palestine Campus Debate
Micah Goodman, Catch-67: The Left, The Right, and The Legacy of the Six-Day War
Michael Lerner, Embracing Israel/Palestine
Michael Stanislawski, Zionism: A Very Short Introduction
Omer Bartov, Israel-Palestine: Lands and Peoples
Penina Eilberg-Schwartz, Sulaiman Khatib, In This Place Together
Rabbi Robert J. Marx, The People in Between: The Paradox of Jewish Interstitiality
Raja Shehadeh, Where the Line Is Drawn: A Tale of Crossings, Friendships, and Fifty Years of Occupation in Israel-Palestine
Sami Adwan, Dan Bar-On, and Eyal Naveh, Side by Side: Parallel Histories of Israel-Palestine
Sandy Tolan, The Lemon Tree (Novel): An Arab, a Jew, and the Heart of the Middle East

Susie Linfield, [The Lions' Den: Zionism and the Left from Hannah Arendt to Noam Chomsky](#)
Tom Segev, [A State at Any Cost: The Life of David Ben-Gurion](#)
Tony Kushner, [Wrestling with Zion: Progressive Jewish-American Responses to the Israeli Conflict](#)
Yehudah Mirsky, [Rav Cook: Mystic in a Time of Revolution](#)
Yossi Klein Halevi, [Letters to My Palestinian Neighbor](#)

Other Guidebooks

April Rosenblum, "[The Past Didn't Go Anywhere: Making Resistance to Antisemitism Part of All of Our Movements](#)"
Jews for Racial and Economic Justice, [Understanding Antisemitism: An Offering to Our Movement](#)

Interactive Websites

American Jewish Committee, [Translate Hate Glossary: How to Spot Antisemitism](#)
Anti-Defamation League, [Antisemitism Uncovered: A Guide to Old Myths in a New Era](#)
Jewish Virtual Library, [Zionism Table of Contents](#)
Jo Kent Katz, [Map of Internalized Antisemitism](#)

Films

Dove Kent at Avodah Speaker Series, [Breaking the Antisemitism Cycle Through Solidarity](#)
PBS Documentary, [Viral: Antisemitism in 4 Mutations](#)
UC Berkeley Antisemitism Education Initiative, [Antisemitism in Our Midst: Past and Present](#)

Educational Organizations & NGOs

[Achvat Amim: Solidarity of Nations](#)

[Americans for Peace Now](#)

[Breaking the Silence](#)

[Encounter Programs](#)

[Givat Haviva: The Center for A Shared Society](#)

[Rabbis for Human Rights](#)

[Resetting the Table](#)

[Roots-Shorashim-Judur](#)

[Shalom Hartman Institute](#)

[A Land for All Two States, One Homeland](#)

Acknowledgements

This project would not have been possible without the generosity and wisdom of the following people:

Most of the individuals below have not seen this guidebook in full (or at all!). Appreciations for this project should be extended to them, but critiques should be leveled only at us.

Arthur and Laurie Gross Schaefer, *Avi Schaefer Fund*

Ben Lorber, *Political Research Associates*

Danielle Kranjec, Lauren Berkun, Rob France, *Shalom Hartman Institute*

Eric K. Ward, *Western States Center*

Janet Cooper Nelson, *Brown University Office of the Chaplains*

Joe Blumberg, Josh Bolton, Molly Goldmeier, *Brown RISD Hillel*

Leah Solomon, *Encounter Programs*

Margo Hughes-Robinson, *T'ruah*

Michelle Dardashti, *Brown RISD Hillel & Brown University, (page 13)*

Michael Hill, Steve Jacobson, *Dorot Foundation*

Rebecca Russo, Tina Malka, *Hillel International*

NBF Spring 2020 Cohort, *Narrow Bridge Fellowship*

Zoë Mermelstein, *Toward Liberation Together, Narrow Bridge Cohorts 2018-2020*

Special thanks to the Dorot Foundation, for its moral and financial support of this project.

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