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VIEWPOINT ARI KALKER

## Is Zionism dead?

**IN 1897**, at the First Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland, it was declared as the goal of Zionism "to create the Jewish homeland in the land of Israel." Today Jews have a homeland and a proper state, a strong military and a healthy economy. We have revived a dead language and brought millions of our fellow brothers and sisters out of exile and home to Israel. We have defended our very existence in multiple wars that were started with the intent of exterminating us, and became world leaders in technology and medicine, as well as experts in agriculture and water. Israel is a success as a country, so why do we still need Zionism?

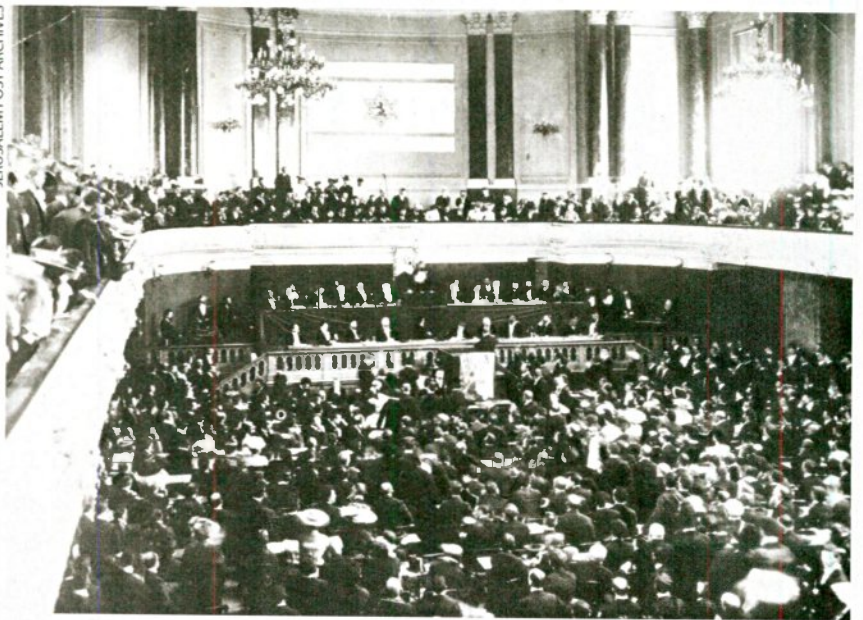
Is our belief in Jewish self-determination in the land of Israel now a hinderance to our continued success? Maybe in order to join the "big leagues" of major countries, we need to shed our Jewish identity, just like Jews of the European Reformation. Maybe we need to make Israel a state of all its citizens and not just the Jewish homeland? Maybe we need to welcome all migrants, and become just another liberal democracy?

On the contrary, our continued success is not going to come from shedding our Zionist and Jewish ideals, not even in spite of them, but purely because of them. It is our Zionist ideals and deep belief in ourselves as a nation that has brought us to where we are today, and it is only through them that we will reach new heights.

It is sheer determination partnered with deep empathy that has allowed us to create one of the most just societies in history. It is our deep moral understanding of human behavior that has led to the innovation in care for people with disabilities developed in Israel. It is our love for our brothers and sisters that has created an open society for the LGBT community, despite the deep religious and cultural beliefs held by many of our citizens. It is our need to heal the wounds of the world that has created one of the most sophisticated biomedical fields in the world and made Israel a leader in medical technology patents.

The one major flaw is our deep passion for seeking peace and ending conflict, which is an ancient Jewish custom. It is our misguided need to appease our enemies that can destroy us, instead of believing in our own just and true cause. As long as we appease our enemies instead of seeking complete victory over them, we will be haunted by our inability to move past the conflict. It is not until our enemies are subdued through victory that we will be able to shift our massive defense investments into other sectors.

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Theodor Herzl addresses the First Zionist Congress in Basel in 1897

Our Judaism and Zionism instruct us how to behave as a nation. They teach us to be proud of our history and our morality. Judaism gives us the moral foundation on which to view the world and the structure on which to create a just society. Zionism gives us the vision for our national embodiment. It is only by combining our Judaism and Zionism, our moral foundation with our national vision that we can truly be the people and create the nation we were destined to be.

It is only once we truly believe in the justness of our cause and reinvigorate our sense of purpose that we can truly move forward. As a nation, we have gotten stuck – stuck in petty arguments among ourselves, stuck in external conflicts with unworthy enemies, stuck in replaying the same pointless conflict over and over again. Victory can only come once we recognize our own people as friends, to care for, cherish and nourish; to heal the wounds in our own community and approach the world from a place of strength and unity. We need to recognize that our enemies are not our friends, and that one can only negotiate with enemies once a complete victory has been achieved and we have removed all hopes they possess of ever destroying us. ■

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