

Origins of Zionism *Modern Zionism* Lesson Plan

Central Historical Question:

How did Zionism differ from earlier efforts at return?

Materials:

- Modern Zionism PowerPoint
- *Modern Zionism* Video
- Historical Background
- Copies of *Documents A-I*

Plan of Instruction:

The PowerPoint, video and supporting documents reinforce lesson content through purposeful repetition and the gradual addition of new material.

1. Pass out Historical Background and Documents A-I.
2. Mini-lecture with PowerPoint:
 - Slide: Zionism: *The dictionary defines it as “a political movement for the establishment and support of a national homeland for Jews in Palestine.” But that tells only part of the story. As Zionism’s founder Theodor Herzl points out in the very first sentence of his most famous book, “The Jewish State,” – “The idea which I have developed in this pamphlet is a very old one...” The reason Herzl says this is that the Zionist idea is based on the biblical promise by God to the Jews. In this sense, Zionism is a modern incarnation of an ancient longing by Jews to return to the Promised Land. As Herzl put it, “To live as free men on their own soil.”*
 - Slide: Proto-Zionists: *Before Herzl published “The Jewish State” in 1896, there were others who called for a return to the Land of Israel by human effort. This itself was an innovation as the consensus among Jews (chastened by the experience of false messiahs) was that the Messiah would appear supernaturally and that it was not for people to attempt to hasten the coming through their own actions.*

The Zionists who came before Herzl are referred to as proto-Zionists. Two of these proto-Zionists were Rabbi Yehuda Alkalai and Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch Kalischer. Born in Sarajevo in 1798, Rabbi Alkalai served as a rabbi in Semlin, the capital of Serbia. In 1834 he published a booklet appealing to Jews to take matters into their own hands and to create colonies in the Land of Israel. The 1840 Damascus Affair, in which Jews were accused of a blood libel, had convinced him that Jews must have their own homeland.

Rabbi Alkalai also provided religious reasons to justify human efforts to settle Palestine. In 1874, at the age of 76, he himself moved with his wife to the Land of Israel.

The next prominent rabbi to argue for a return was Tzvi Hirsch Kalischer, a rabbi in the then-Prussian town of Thorn. In 1862, he published “Drishat Zion” (or “Seeking Zion”), in which he argued that “The redemption of Israel, for which we long, is not to be imagined as a sudden miracle.” He offered concrete steps to prepare for the return and convinced a French-Jewish group, the Alliance Israelite Universelle, to establish an agricultural school in Jaffa.

- *Slide: Moses Hess: Another proto-Zionist is Moses Hess. A contemporary of Alkalai and Kalischer, Hess was a socialist who argued that the religion of Moses was dead and that Jews would be better off merging with the peoples among whom they lived. This made it all the more surprising when in 1862 he published “Rome and Jerusalem” in which he argued the opposite – that because of anti-Semitism the Jews would never be accepted in the countries in which they lived and should create a Jewish state. He had given up on assimilation, writing, “But even an act of conversion cannot relieve the Jew of the enormous pressure of German antisemitism.”*
- *Slide: Before Their Time: Hess, Alkalai and Kalischer’s writings contain many of the ideas that would be repeated by Herzl and later Zionists. They were ahead of their time.*
- *Slide: Leon Pinsker: Leon Pinsker is a Russian-Jewish doctor who initially believed that if Jews made efforts to integrate into Russian society the problem of anti-Semitism would solve itself. But when government-organized pogroms break out in Odessa in 1871 his doubts grow and when violence renews in 1881, he finally jettisons his old ideas. In his 1882 book “Auto-Emancipation” he writes that the Jews must leave Europe and Russia (Jews are far worse off in Russia) and establish their own homeland. Although the book is attacked by Orthodox and assimilationist Jews, it is well-received by others. The ground has been prepared, in part thanks to the creation of Hovevei Zion, or Lovers of Zion, groups.*
- *Slide: Hovevei Zion: Hovevei Zion (“Lovers of Zion”) groups are small organizations that sprout spontaneously and independently across Russia and Eastern Europe starting in the 1870s. One of these Hovevei Zion groups will in 1882 help found the first Zionist settlement in Palestine, Rishon LeTzion (which means “First in Zion”). These groups share a wish to see the Jews restored in their ancient land. But they’re not organized as*

part of a larger movement and they look to Pinsker to lead them. Pinsker, who is over 60 years old when he writes “Auto-Emancipation” is a private man and not interested in leading a movement. But he finally relents and leads the effort to create a larger organization at a conference in 1884 in Kattowitz, Germany (now Poland). Pinsker doesn’t meet with much success and dies in 1891. While the Hovevei Zion groups establish a few settlements in Eretz Israel, it will fall to Theodor Herzl to organize the broad-based Zionist movement.

- *Slide: Theodor Herzl: Theodor Herzl will become Zionism’s most important leader. Like Pinsker, he, is a non-observant, assimilated Jew who becomes interested in solving the Jewish question. And like Pinsker, he is driven to become a Jewish nationalist because of anti-Semitism. Herzl lives in Vienna and works as a journalist and playwright. The Dreyfus Affair, in which a French-Jewish captain is wrongly convicted of treason, impacts Herzl. He’s also shaken by rising antisemitism in his hometown of Vienna. Like Moses Hess, Herzl concludes the Jews will never be accepted in Europe. He decides the best answer to antisemitism is for the Jews to create their own state.*
- *Slide: The Jewish State: Herzl’s “The Jewish State” appears in 1896. He argues that in a Jewish state: “We shall live at last as free men on our own soil, and die peacefully in our own homes.” The book propels him to the head of the Zionist movement. Although the ideas in it are not new, part of its power comes from the fact that Herzl is an assimilated Jew who reached his conclusions by himself.*
- *Slide: Max Nordau: Herzl makes two allies – both are writers more famous than himself. The first and most important is Max Nordau, who lives in Paris. He, too, is a culturally assimilated Jew who thought of himself as a European with no national ties. Antisemitism makes him aware of the flaw in his thinking. He joins Herzl’s efforts and speaks at the first Zionist Congress. Nordau’s reputation and connections became crucial to Herzl. Says one historian, “Herzl’s audience with the Sultan Abdul-Hamid, a diplomatic coup which he used as a spring-board for later negotiations in London, would have been impossible without the intervention of [Herman] Vamberi. Though nothing revealed Herzl’s sagacity in handling people more than his dealings with Vamberi, it is clear that the personal friendship between the latter and Nordau first prompted Vamberi to serve the Zionist cause.” Nordau also engaged in direct diplomatic activities with French politicians. To quote one historian: “Unquestionably, more than any other man, with the exception of Herzl, Nordau was responsible for the fact that Zionism was accepted with such readiness by all diplomatic circles after the First World War.”*

- Slide: Israel Zangwill: *Nordau introduces Herzl to Israel Zangwill, a famous Jewish author in England. He plays an important part in introducing Zionist ideas to British statesmen. As one historian says, "No man, save Herzl, did as much to entrench Zionism in England and bind England to Zionism."*
- Slide: Herzl's Innovation: *Herzl made many contributions to Zionism. One of the most important is the way he used modern political methods. Herzl argued against immigration without political guarantees. Herzl showed that without political rights, settlement would fail, as had happened so many times in the past. He said that you could never build a house on land you don't own and expect it to last. Eventually the landowner will come along and evict you. For this reason, Herzl spent most of his Zionist career working to gain political rights for Jews in the Land of Israel. Though he didn't live to see the fruit of his efforts, he started the process that would culminate in the State of Israel.*
- Slide: The Arabs: *The Zionists don't view the Arabs as a problem in these early years. For one thing, the land was sparsely populated. According to Ottoman statistics there were only 300,000 people in the area in 1890. The Zionists are optimistic that their efforts will benefit Arabs as well as Jews. An examination of Herzl's novel "Altneuland" (Old-New Land), written in 1902 which envisions the benefits a future Jewish state will accrue to the Arabs, is a good indication of Zionist attitudes at the time. A Jewish state would not oppress Arabs but redound to their benefit.*

Herzl biographer Alex Bein, summarizing the ideal Jewish state depicted in "Altneuland", writes: "There are no race laws. The Arabs live in friendship side by side with the Jews. The incoming of the Jews has been nothing but a gain for them, first through the sale of superfluous lands and by well-paid work in the draining of swamps, a work for which they, adapted as they are to the climate, are better fitted than the Jews. But on top of that they have learned much from the Jews in the way of new economic organization; the filth of their villages has disappeared under the influence and through the example of adjacent Jewish settlements. The introduction of new methods of production and superior transportation has increased the orange export tenfold. 'The Jews have enriched us,' says David's friend Reshid Bey [a character in Altneuland]. 'Why should we have anything against them? They live with us like brothers, why should we not love them?'"

- Slide: The Zionist Congress: *In August 1897, Herzl holds a Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland. It's a huge success, attracting worldwide publicity, and excitement among Jews. The Congress evolves to become a kind of parliament-in-exile for the Jews. In his diary on Sept. 3, 1897, shortly after the First Congress, Herzl says: "The essence of a state lies in the will of the people for a state." For that reason he writes: "Were I to sum*

up the Basel Congress in a word – which I shall guard against pronouncing publicly – it would be this: At Basel I founded the Jewish State. If I said this out loud today, I would be answered by universal laughter. Perhaps in five years, and certainly in fifty, everyone will perceive it.”

- Slide: May 14, 1948: *Herzl was prescient. The Jewish State would be declared on May 14, 1948 – exactly 50 years 8 months and 11 days after Herzl wrote those words.*

3. Play video: Modern Zionism

4. Hand out Historical Background

Introduce inquiry question: How did Zionism differ from earlier efforts at return?

5. Whole class discussion:

- Antisemitism was a driving force that turned many culturally assimilated Jews into Zionists. Can you think of positive forces also that would have motivated them to become Zionists?
- Herzl, Pinsker and others believed that a Jewish state would end the problem of antisemitism. Do you think this has happened? If not, why not?
- Hess, Kalischer and Alkalai, even Pinsker, are considered ahead of their time. What other factors besides timing might have accounted for Herzl's success?
- What was Herzl's unique contribution?

6. Hand out Review Questions (may be used as end of class Quiz).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

From the Early Middle Ages up to the late 1700s, Jews were restricted in their freedoms in Christian Europe. In cities, they were forced to stay in special areas called ghettos and many professions were forbidden to them.

This situation changed in the late 18th century. Starting in France in 1791, Jews were freed from these restrictions and given full citizenship. These freedoms gradually extended to other states in Europe, (though not to Tsarist Russia, which largely maintained its laws against Jews).

Jews became highly successful citizens of the countries in which they lived. They became professors, lawyers, writers, bankers, and men of industry. Grateful for their newfound freedoms, they also began to assimilate; that is, to integrate into their surrounding societies. They played down the idea that they belonged to a separate Jewish nation, and began to define themselves as German, English, French or Italian, albeit of the “Mosaic faith.”

But Jewish success, and Jewish attempts at assimilation, did not make anti-Semitism disappear. The hatred reemerged in the 19th century. Prominent anti-Semites included politicians, writers and composers.

Assimilated Jews, like Dr. Leo Pinsker in Russia, and later Theodor Herzl in Vienna, recognized that emancipation was not enough to allow the Jews to escape from the hatred that pursued them. Their observations led them to conclude that the only solution to the problem was the creation of a Jewish state, which would again put the Jews on an equal footing with other nations.

Vocabulary

Anti-Semitism: discrimination against or prejudice or hostility toward Jews.

Emancipation: the act of freeing or state of being freed; liberation

Document A: “*The Third Redemption*”, Rabbi Yehudah Alkalai (1843)

The redemption will begin with efforts by the Jews themselves; they must organize and unite, choose leaders, and leave the lands of exile. Since no community can exist without a governing body, the very first new ordinance must be the appointment of the elders of each district, men of piety and wisdom, to oversee all the affairs of the community. I humbly suggest that this chosen assembly – the assembly of the elders – is what is meant by the promise to us of the Messiah, the son of Joseph. ...

I ask of our brethren that they organize a company, on the mode of the fire insurance companies and of the railroad companies. Let this company appeal to the Sultan to give us back the land of our ancestors in return for an annual rent. Once the name of Israel is again applied to our land, all Jews will be inspired to help this company with all the means at their disposal. Though this venture will begin modestly, its future will be very great.

Source: *"The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader"*, Arthur Hertzberg, The Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1997, p. 106-107.

Document B: "Seeking Zion", Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer (1862)

The redemption of Israel, for which we long, is not to be imagined as a sudden miracle. The Almighty, blessed be His Name, will not suddenly descend from on high and command His people to go forth. He will not send the Messiah from heaven in a twinkling of an eye, to sound the great trumpet for the scattered of Israel and gather them into Jerusalem. He will not surround the Holy City with a wall of fire or cause the Holy Temple to descend from the heavens. The bliss and the miracles that were promised by His servants, the prophets, will certainly come to pass – everything will be fulfilled – but we will not run in terror and flight, for the Redemption of Israel will come by slow degrees and the ray of deliverance will shine forth gradually.

My dear reader! Cast aside the conventional view that the Messiah will suddenly sound a blast on the great trumpet and cause all the inhabitants of the earth to tremble. On the contrary, the Redemption will begin by awakening support among the philanthropists and by

gaining the consent of the nations to the gathering of some of the scattered of Israel into the Holy Land.

Source: “*The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader*”, Arthur Hertzberg, *The Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1997, p. 111.*

**Document C: “*Rome and Jerusalem*”, Moses Hess
(1862)**

We shall always remain strangers among the nations. They may even be moved by a sense of humanity and justice to emancipate us, but they will never respect us as long as we make *ubi bene ibi patria* our guiding principle, indeed almost a religion, and place it above our own great national memories. Religious fanaticism may cease to cause hatred of the Jews in the more culturally advanced countries; but despite enlightenment and emancipation, the Jew in exile who denies his nationality will never earn the respect of the nations among whom he dwells. He may become a naturalized citizen, but he will never be able to convince the gentiles of his total separation from his own nationality.

Vocabulary

ubi bene ibi patria: Wherever it is good, that is our homeland.

Source: *"The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader"*, Arthur Hertzberg, The Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1997, p. 121.

**Document D: "A History of Israel", Howard Sachar
(1976)**

By the late 1870s, several years before the outbreak of Alexander III's pogroms, Zionist study circles and clubs had begun to function in hundreds of the Pale's cities and towns. Some called themselves "parties" or "assemblies." A number adopted such titles as Ezra or Maccabi. But all were generally known as Chovevei Zion – Lovers of Zion. Their common ingredient was acceptance of the credo "that there is no salvation for the People of Israel unless they establish a government of their own in the Land of Israel." In the classic pattern of other European nationalist movements, a few of these early groups simply offered courses in the Hebrew language and history. Others established choirs or gymnastic and self-defense organizations. The meetings were conducted secretly, for Zionism, like other varieties of minority nationalism, was quite illegal in the tsarist empire. More inhibiting yet, there was no central direction to the Chovevei Zion cause.

Source: "A History of Israel: From the Rise of Zionism to Our Time", Howard M. Sachar, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2007 (First Published 1976), p. 16.

**Document E: "Auto-Emancipation", Leo Pinsker
(1882)**

The essence of the problem, as we see it, lies in the fact that, in the midst of the nations among whom the Jews reside, they form a distinctive element which cannot be assimilated, which cannot be readily digested by any nation. Hence the problem is to find means of so adjusting the relations of this exclusive element to the whole body of the nations that there shall never be any further basis for the Jewish Question. ...

The struggle of the Jews for unity and independence as an organized nation not only possesses the inherent justification that belongs to the struggle of every oppressed people, but it is also calculated to attract the sympathy of the people to whom we are rightly or wrongly obnoxious. This struggle must be entered upon in such a spirit as to exert an irresistible pressure upon the international politics of the present, and the future will assuredly bear witness to its results. ...

The proper, the only remedy, would be the creation of a Jewish nationality, of a people living upon its own soil, the auto-emancipation of the Jews; their emancipation as a nation among nations by the acquisition of a home of their own.

Source: "Auto-Emancipation", Leo Pinsker, Scopus Publishing Co., New York, 1944 (First Published 1882), p. 75-105.

Document F: “*The Jewish State*”, Theodor Herzl (1896)

The idea which I have developed in this pamphlet is a very old one: it is the restoration of the Jewish State.

The world resounds with outcries against the Jews, and these outcries have awakened the slumbering idea. ...

The Jewish question still exists. It would be foolish to deny it. It is a remnant of the Middle Ages, which civilized nations do not even yet seem able to shake off, try as they will. They certainly showed a generous desire to do so when they emancipated us. The Jewish question exists wherever Jews live in perceptible numbers. Where it does not exist, it is carried by Jews in the course of their migrations. We naturally move to those places where we are not persecuted, and there our presence produces persecution. This is the case in every country, and will remain so, even in those highly civilized — for instance, France — until the Jewish question finds a solution on a political basis. The unfortunate Jews are now carrying the seeds of anti-Semitism into England; they have already introduced it into America.

I believe that I understand anti-Semitism, which is really a highly complex movement. I consider it from a Jewish standpoint, yet without fear or hatred. I believe that I can see what elements there are in it of vulgar sport, of common trade jealousy, of inherited prejudice, of religious intolerance, and also of pretended self-defense. I think the Jewish question is no more a social than a religious one, notwithstanding that it sometimes takes these and other forms. It is a national question, which can only be solved by making it a political world-question to be discussed and settled by the civilized nations of the world in council.

Source: “*The Jewish State*”, Theodor Herzl, Dover Publications Inc., New York, 1988 (First Published 1896). p. 69-76

Document G: “*Zionism*” by Max Nordau (1902)

The new Zionism, which has been called political, differs from the old, religious, messianic variety in that it disavows all mysticism, no longer identifies itself with messianism, and does not expect the return to Palestine to be brought about by a miracle, but desires to prepare the way by its own efforts.

The new Zionism has grown only in part out of the inner impulses of Judaism itself, out of the enthusiasm of modern educated Jews for their history and martyrology, out of an awakened pride in their racial qualities, out of ambition to save the ancient people for a long, long future and to add new great deeds of posterity to those of their ancestors.

For the rest, Zionism is the result of two impulses which came from without: first, the principle of nationality, which dominated thought and sentiment in Europe for half a century and determined the politics of the world; second, anti-Semitism, from which the Jews of all countries suffer to some degree.

Source: “The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader”, Arthur Hertzberg, The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1997. p. 242.

Document H: “*The Founding Fathers of Zionism*”, Benzion Netanyahu (1937)

Herzl's special stature is inherent in the teaching which was his alone, a teaching which was not known to Hess and Hovevei Zion, neither to Shabbetai Zevi and Shlomo Molho, nor was it known to any of those millions of Jews longing for redemption. Since they did not know it, since only he knew it, only his idea produced results, or to be precise results followed only the activity he undertook which emanated from this thought. ...

Herzl's unique greatness was not in teaching that the only solution to the Jewish question was a Jewish state, but rather in teaching *how to put this idea into practice*, and in explaining *the only way* in which it was possible to put it into practice. Herzl himself knew well that herein lay his entire innovation: “Because all the leaders who sought to lead you know where Zion is.” So why have you not been able to come to Zion? “Because it is not possible to arrive at the goal in a straight line.” Since one needs to choose a concrete path, and every such path involves obstacles and delays, and since all the previously chosen paths were quickly blocked, “this is a very complicated question.” “The problem is that of the path,” Herzl said, clearly defining the crux of the matter. Therefore we can say that Herzl's teaching which, as we have noted, was his alone, *was the teaching of the way to make Zionism a reality*.

The course of national revival which Herzl charted, and in which his entire greatness lies, was clearly not accepted in either his own time or after his death. During these years, Herzl's ideas stood in sharp contrast to the method advocated by those who shared, for the most part, his analysis of the state of world Jewry, but never understood the mode of operation he espoused or the means by which he sought to realize their shared ambitions. The simple and modest approach of Herzl's opponents did not require undue mental effort. They sought to proceed toward their objective in a straight line. They wanted to follow the simple laws of arithmetic, believing this was the only practical way to achieve their desired goal. They knew that one million Jews are comprised of one million individuals, that one million acres are comprised of one million single-acre plots, and they assumed that to

achieve their objective, they needed only to bring to Palestine one Jew after another and to purchase acre after acre. They never imagined that in traveling this direct path, they were bound to run into brick walls. They never paid due attention to the fact that they would encounter a government in Palestine whose opposition to the Zionist plan – an opposition they clearly felt from time to time – might take a form that would eliminate any possibility of their continued activity.

Nor did they pay much attention to the fact that there was a body of native residents in the country who formed the majority of the population and who, together with the government, could put a stop to both their immigration and settlement virtually whenever they pleased. They thought that they could avoid, or at least minimize these disturbances, by refraining from speaking openly about them, or more clearly: they wanted to proceed quietly and stealthily toward their goal. ...

Then, Herzl arose and boldly declared: No more gradual immigration! No more infiltration! For he considered the notion that the Jews could become the majority in the country through the gradual arrival of settlers, to be childish and absurd. ...

He also explained his thinking by way of a parable of someone trying to build a house of stone. “They are dragging stone after stone to the building site and assume that as a result a house will be erected. Never!” – Herzl claimed without any reservation – “The house will never be built in that way!” For there are countervailing forces whose resistance is as certain as the laws of gravity. “It’s folly to construct a house without being assured the land on which it is built. For without that, the owner of the land will come one day and raze the building or evict us from the house which we constructed for ourselves.”

Source: “The Founding Fathers of Zionism”, Benzion Netanyahu, Balfour Books, Jerusalem, 2012 (Herzl Essay First Published 1937), p. 72-78.

**Document I: “*Diary Entry*”, Theodor Herzl
(Sept. 3, 1897)**

If I were to sum up the Congress in a word – which I shall take care not to publish – it would be this: At Basel I founded the Jewish State.

If I said this out loud today I would be greeted by universal laughter. In five years perhaps, and certainly in fifty years, everyone will perceive it.

Source: “The Diaries of Theodor Herzl,” Theodor Herzl, Translated and Edited by Marvin Lowenthal, Grosset & Dunlap, New York, 1962 (First Published 1956). p. 224.

Modern Zionism Graphic Organizer

Name _____

	Document G	Document H
<p>Based on this document, how does Zionism differ from earlier efforts at return?</p>		
<p>Provide evidence from the document to back up your claim.</p>		