



Types of Zionism

This document explains the many different forms of Zionism, their historical roots as well as their similarities and differences.

Political Zionism is the original Zionist movement initiated by Theodor Herzl. In the late 19th century, Herzl, an Austrian reporter, viewed with increasing alarm the anti-Semitism present in Western Europe. In addition to witnessing the rise to power of an anti-Semitic mayor in his hometown of Vienna, Herzl reported from the court martial for treason of a French-Jewish Captain, Alfred Dreyfus. In what would become known as the Dreyfus Affair, blatant anti-Semitism resulted in a false conviction of Captain Dreyfus. This led Herzl to believe that the only solution for European Jews would be the creation of a Jewish state. Herzl's vision of Zionism was to fight for a sovereign Jewish state on Jewish-owned land on the international stage. Political Zionism was adapted and brought to many of the world's leaders after the First Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland, in 1897. The movement continues today with the World Zionist Organization, and World Zionist Congress that meets every four years, including June 2006.

Revisionist Zionism was founded by Ze'ev Jabotinsky after splitting from the Zionist Organization and its chairman, Chaim Weizmann. Revisionist philosophies included increasing cooperation with Britain in order to receive the entire Mandate of Palestine as a Jewish Homeland loyal to the British Crown. As the party evolved, two distinct categories of policy emerged. On one side, the Centrists advocated for a liberal democracy reminiscent of the British. On the other, the *Irgun* (or *Etzel*) developed as a militant underground organization who wanted to fight for a Jewish State on both sides of the Jordan River independent from British rule.

Labor Zionism, unlike Political Zionism, advocated for class struggles and *Aliyot* (immigrations) to Palestine in order to found a Jewish homeland. Most of those who belonged to these movements were secular and expressed their socialist ideals by setting up Kibbutzim across Palestine in the early 20th century. Labor Zionists founded *HaGanah* as a defense force for the growing Jewish population of Palestine, which eventually turned into the Israeli Defense Forces, or *TzaHaL* (*Tzavah HaGanah L'Yisrael*). Among the early leaders of the Labor Zionists was David Ben Gurion, Israel's first Prime Minister, whose vision of a desert blooming with vegetation continues to guide Israel's development. The Labor Zionist party dominated within the *Knesset* from the *Yishuv* (the Jewish government in Palestine) up until the 1970s. Today, the Labor Zionist Party has split into several different parties, including, Labor (*HaAvodah*), and *Meretz-Yachad* (Energy-Together – A Social Democratic Israel).

Cultural Zionism is the branch of Zionism that is focused on maintaining the core of Jewish history and culture. Ahad Ha'am, its founder, realized the need to modernize Judaism and expand its boundaries outside of traditional practices. He was able to engage the Jewish youth, and motivated a small number of Hebrew speakers to move to Palestine and settle the land not because it was important to the religion, but because it was crucial to Jewish history and heritage.



After the Fifth Zionist Congress, two rabbis established the *Mizrachi* (Spiritual Center) Movement, which encouraged the cultural activities associated with Zionism to be combined with ones of religious significance. **Religious Zionism** was later modified by Rav Kook, Chief Rabbi of Israel. The main tenets of Religious Zionism are a renewal of Jewish political thought and a return to the devotion of the Torah and its commandments, especially those concerning *Eretz Yisrael*. Today, Religious Zionists usually align themselves with the National Religious Party in the *Knesset* (Israeli Parliament).

Christian Zionism is very closely related to Religious Zionism. Its foundations are based on the Old Testament, as is Religious Zionism. After several steps, including the formation and support of the State of Israel, many Christian Zionists believe that Jesus will return as the Messiah. *I do not think the section on Christian Zionism belongs in this Kit. Jewish Zionists, particularly the reform movement, are still wary of the relationship between conservative Christians and the Zionist movement. Furthermore, it is not a Jewish movement (obviously), and has never been taught alongside the rest of these movements in classes on Zionism from a Jewish perspective. If nothing else, it should be at the very bottom of this list, with a discussion of its relevance from a political perspective today, and the fact that the relationship between Jewish and Christian Zionists is constantly evolving.*

Reform Zionism, as it is referred to in North America, or **Progressive Zionism** as it is known worldwide, is an ideological and a political movement, and works through organizations such as ARZA (Association of Reform Zionists of America), ARZA Canada, and the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism. Although Reform/Progressive Judaism was originally anti-Zionist, it has completely turned around and is now at the forefront of Zionist advocacy. Through its focus on *Tikkun Olam*, Reform Zionism places a greater emphasis on social justice and a betterment of society within Israel.