

The State Of Judaism

# JUDAISM 3.0

JUDAISM'S TRANSFORMATION TO ZIONISM

*by*

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The transformation actually strengthens the Jewish faith, as Zionism helps people feel a higher belonging to Judaism, and while at ease and not “under pressure,” it would make them more likely to exercise their faith freely and embrace religious aspects. If a person feels a stronger sense of being Jewish due to his national affiliation, he is more likely to deepen that sense of being Jewish through religious practice.

A prerequisite to the transformation is that Zionism stays Jewish. There is no Zionism absent Judaism, and that includes the Jewish faith. The transformation is not about “from the Tanach to the Palmach” – the idea of skipping Rabbinic Judaism and going from the Biblical era to the Zionist era (from Judaism 1.0 to Judaism 3.0). Such a notion is contradictory to the core principle of the Jewish transformation. Zionism is inseparable from Rabbinic Judaism.

## 5. IMPLICATION: ZIONISM – THE GOLDEN ERA OF JUDAISM

The return of Jews to the Land of Israel is not only the most underestimated event in Jewish history but also in Jewish theology. It is not only that the Jewish religion needs to be adjusted to accommodate the new realities of residing in the ancestral land on which much of its religion is based on. Similarly, it is not just that the Jewish religion needs to be modified to the reality of renewed sovereignty and Jewish governance.

Indeed, this is not about adjustments to Judaism. The return of the Jews to their land is a transformative event in Judaism. This return represents a seismic shift. Applying the old architecture that successfully bound world Judaism for two millennia could be dangerous, as it may not be able to bind Judaism given current realities. The basic fundamental approach to Judaism needs to change.

While on the micro-level, details of adjustments are convoluted, debatable, and might require long processes of making decisions<sup>7</sup> on various levels and jurisdictions, the shift in the fundamental approach to Judaism is simple – it takes place in people’s consciousness. Indeed, such a shift is already occurring.

### *(i) The Utopia has turned into prophecy*

Herzl wrote a Utopian novel called *AltNeuLand* – Old-New-Land, in which he outlined how the Jewish state would look and how the world’s nations would accept it and even be inspired by it. Sprinkled through his various speeches, letters, diary entries, articles and conversations, Herzl crafted a vision which has become today’s Zionism. A close, slow read of Herzl would unveil Judaism 3.0.

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7 – For example: Is rice now kosher for Passover?

“There are those who do not understand us properly and believe that the goal of our effort is to return to our land,” he said in 1899. “Our ideal goes further than that. Our ideal is the vision of eternal truth. It is an ideal that always moves forward. It is an ideal that is infinite.”

Indeed, Zionism is a dream that is continuing to move forward. In the epilogue to *AltNeuLand*, Herzl wrote a message to the book, and perhaps to his entire movement – a note to its future custodians: “Now, dear Book, after three years of labor, we must part, and your sufferings will begin. You will have to make your way through enmity and misrepresentation as through a dark forest. When, however, you come among friendly folk, give them greetings from your father. Tell them that he believes dreams also are a fulfillment of the days of our sojourn on earth. Dreams are not so different from deeds, as some may think. All the deeds of men are only dreams at first. And in the end, their deeds dissolve into dreams.”

The dreams of Herzl turned into a deed – Zionism. Now this deed is turning into a Dream – Judaism 3.0 – a transformation of Judaism.

### The Book of Herzl

It is possible that if Herzl wrote in Biblical times, his writings would have been included in the Biblical canon. This is purely hypothetical and certainly a loaded and debatable question. But what is safe to say, is that “the book of Herzl” is akin to that of other post-Biblical Jewish figures – those who shaped Rabbinic Judaism (Judaism 2.0).

Just like with other Jewish thinkers such as Yehuda Halevy, Maimonides and Nachmanides, Herzl’s writing as well, is to some extent, an abstract interpretation of the Torah and of the relationship of the Jewish people with God.

For the Jewish thinkers in the Middle Ages, during the time of Rabbinic Judaism (Judaism 2.0), the overall environment, language and code-of-communication was a religious one. Hence, their writings are classified as such and deemed religious.

Herzl wrote at a different time, but his concepts are similar. Furthermore, one can say that in retrospect, many of Yehuda Halevy’s, Maimonides’ and Nachmanides’ thoughts and concepts were not religious, but national concepts – akin to Herzl. Judaism has been a nation-religion since its inception. It is only after the 19th century that a separation has been made between the national and religious elements. Indeed, those Middle Age thinkers’ call for a return to Israel would be viewed in today’s bifurcated framework as a national concept – not a religious one. Extrapolation of this to Zionism can show that Herzl’s words are not only about Jewish nationalism, just as Yehuda Halevy’s are

not only about the Jewish religion.

With Zionism as the organizing principle of Judaism, it is becoming more clear that Herzl's thoughts are first and foremost building blocks of Judaism.

### The Exodus from Europe vs. Arrival in Israel

Indeed, Herzl studied Moses and understood that transformations of the magnitude that both Moses and he were undertaking take time. "A new generation will arise whom we must educate for our purposes," he wrote. According to Herzl's own interpretation of the Biblical story of the Hebrews' wandering in the desert, it was less about the arrival in the Land of Israel (the destination), and more about the transformation of the nation through the wandering (the journey). He called the 40 years in the desert "education through migration."

Both Moses' Judaism and Herzl's Zionism were drawn only in general terms at first. Moses did not delve into details or into the depth of the religion at the onset. This was done gradually, later on through a monumental event in Sinai and indeed through the 40 years in the desert.

Both had an analogous rhythm: An exodus from Egypt/Europe, where the majority of Jews lived (estimated 100% in Egypt's case and over 80% in Europe's case), re-education of the nation (de-exile), and then a prolonged process of development of Judaism 1.0/Judaism 3.0. Just as the Exodus from Egypt is core to Judaism, the 20th century exodus from Europe is core to Herzl's Zionism. Both Judaism and Zionism are expressed in contrast to what we were in Egypt/Europe.

While Egypt and Europe are admired both in Moses' Judaism (Judaism 1.0) and in Herzl's Zionism (Judaism 3.0), nothing can be more counter to Moses's Judaism as the return to Egypt, just like nothing can be more counter to Herzl's Zionism as the return to Europe – both physically and metaphorically.

The threat of such a return to Egypt dominates a significant portion of the 40 years in the desert and continues long after Moses' death. Being an astute student of Moses, Herzl recognized that the same danger also existed in an exodus from Europe. He wrote: "In the first 25 years of our existence we need, for our development, some rest from Europe, its wars and social complications."

Herzl identified the primary vehicle to safeguard against a return to Europe: the Passover Seder. It is a powerful tool to remind the Jewish nation: Do not return to Egypt! Neither physically nor mentally. Indeed,