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**ZINES THAT
COME NEXT**

THERE IS NO SECULAR ZIONISM

A ZINE FOR THE PERPLEXED

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recently, i've been saying "there's no such thing as a secular Zionism" and people haven't understood what i mean.

so here's what i mean.

Zionism is defined by the religious premise of a divine landgrant.

that's both **its ideological core** – jews as a religiously defined nation have the inalienable right to rule the land surrounding jerusalem – and **the single defining element of its historical emergence** as a political movement. nominal secularists have affiliated themselves with the Zionist movement, but their supposed secularism coexists with commitment to a movement that is fundamentally religious.

ideologically, Zionism is a movement for jewish territorial sovereignty in palestine. that's what defines it as "Zion"ism, in contrast to other movements for jewish territorial sovereignty, which generally get lumped together as "Territorialist". this is a purely and exclusively religious premise. there is no other reason to limit a jewish territorial sovereignty project to that specific territory.

a sidebar to deal with the usual red herrings and historical fictions:

at the time when anything emerged that we would recognize as jewishness, in either a peoplehood sense or in terms of religious canon and practice, the majority of people we could call jews had lived outside palestine for generations with no apparent desire to change that, and there was no jewish sovereignty over the extremely mixed population of the province. further, this founding diaspora existed and grew by choice and by affiliation, rather than by force – there was no mass expulsion from judea under the romans.

the intermittent earlier periods of judean rule in the area did not involve anything we would recognize as jewishness. they also did not involve anything we would recognize as political sovereignty: judean rulers were always dependent clients of one or another of the region's major powers (up to the roman conquest, generally either a nile valley or a mesopotamian empire), governing only to the extent that they were permitted.

that's the actual historical record. the jewish mythic canon's accounts of israelite kingdoms only contact that record by including names of a very few late rulers that appear in records elsewhere, which only shows that the writers knew some historical names. there is no reason to treat it as a historical source rather than as the equivalent of King Arthur stories (which are a kind of politicized vaguely historical fiction we know existed in the region at the time these texts were composed).

using texts from the mythic canon as if they were historical records is itself an inherently religious project (and has been central to, and enthusiastically promoted by, the Zionist movement from the beginning).

historically, Zionism took form out of a broad sphere of people who wanted a territorial-sovereignty solution to the Jewish Question. theodor herzl's writing and organizing pulled a lot of them into a shared political formation during the 1890s. but when that formation solidified organizationally, it quickly divided into the Zionist movement, based on the premise of the divine landgrant of palestine, and a collection of smaller "Territorialist" groups, whose only criterion for the location of their project was practicality. the Zionist majority, however, delayed making a definitive organizational split until after herzl died – specifically because he was committed to a middle road, preferring palestine but willing to actively explore other sites, and they thought (probably correctly) he would not go with them in a formal separation.

which is to say: herzl's relative flexibility about the centrality of its religious premise placed him outside of Zionism.

even their founding figurehead is stolen.

bringing together the ideological and historical elements, in the key later period of Zionist consolidation and self-definition after the 1948 nakba, supposed secularists and representatives of supposedly secular political tendencies and organizations were among the most active in making the Zionist narrative more explicitly religious. the best example is david ben gurion, leader of the supposedly secular socialist Poalei Zion, the supposedly secular socialist Histadrut, and the supposedly secular socialist Mapai, who as prime minister of israel had a study group on the biblical Book of Joshua in which he crafted the core narrative of the founding of the Zionist state, which has guided its self-understanding ever since.

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Zionism's fictional secularism is very similar in form to the fictional socialism of Labor Zionism. as self-described "super-Zionist" historian zeev sternhell details in *The Founding Myths of Israel*, supposedly socialist tendencies within Zionism do not share the ideological core of socialism (the project of self-liberation of the working class, which in these groups is explicitly subordinated to the unity of the jewish nation), and its history is one of betrayal rather than embodiment of socialist practice in the relationship between the working class and the capitalist ruling class within the Zionist settlement/state.

what Zionism matches, ideologically and historically, is **its fellow european integral nationalist movements**, which typically have a wing that claims a socialist orientation in a similarly fictional way. that wing became the dominant element in italy (the Fascist movement), germany (the National Socialist German Workers Party), and elsewhere during the same period as it did in the Zionist movement, becoming more marginal later in the 20th century just as it did within Zionism. this parallel was also clearly visible to these elements of the Zionist movement: ben gurion's Mapai embraced collegial economic collaboration with the NSDAP regime in 1933 in a way it declined to pursue with socialist coalition governments in france, spain, and elsewhere at the time; jabotinsky's Betar (not officially socialist, but with gestures towards a class politics) was explicitly inspired by and modeled on mussolini's Fascists (who they partnered with to found a naval academy in 1934), and aligned their WWII partizan units with the polish National Armed Forces (NSZ), whose integral nationalism had a similar Fascist-inspired orientation to class politics.



similarly, Zionism matches **other religious settler colonialisms**. the equally genocidal english colonization of north america, for example, was practically spearheaded and ideologically led by explicitly religious projects, who constantly cited the same texts from Joshua that ben gurion drew on (as he likely knew). more broadly, the same biblical sources were used to establish the axiomatic holiness of establishing the puritan protestant "city on the hill" on massachusetts land as are invoked to justify the jewish conquest of palestinian land to build a "light unto the nations".

and they are just as reliably called on by catholic imperial endeavors in the americas and elsewhere; by other flavors of protestants in south africa, australia, aotearoa; by the mormon settlers who founded deseret. and, of course, every european settler colonial project is based to some extent on the theological doctrine of res nullius/terra nullius, which became part of modern international law through the incorporation of roman law into christian imperial practice. many of these religious settler colonial projects have resulted in nominally secular states; all of them retain their fundamental religious orientation to their sovereignty over the territory they occupy. Zionism is no exception – it is if anything more overt, because it is younger than some of its sibling ideologies.

**there's no such thing as a secular Zionism.
never has been. never will be.**

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**IS A ZINE SERIES FOR WHEN YOU'VE
ALREADY DONE THE BASIC READING**

**BEGINNER STORIES ARE PERFECT FOR BEGINNERS.
NOT EVERYONE IS A BEGINNER.**

שארית קרח **shearith korakh**

tradition tells us: after the slave revolt in egypt, the former slaves and their allies wound up adrift in the desert east of the Red Sea. as moyshe and aron consolidated their power as 'leaders' of the revolt and escape, a group challenged their self-appointed rulership. the speaker for the rebellious group, korakh, used the religious/political language of the day to make the anti-authoritarian case: "you have gone too far! for all the community are holy, all of them, and the holy one is in their midst. why then do you raise yourselves above the holy one's congregation?" [numbers 16:3]. it took murderous divine interventions, killing thousands in earthquakes, fire, and plague, to crush the anti- hierarchical revolt. the establishment of the hereditary high priesthood followed, institutionalizing the b'nei amram family's rule.

'shearith korakh' means 'the remnant or survivors of korakh'
those who follow in the tradition of that rebellion, insisting on full freedom as we struggle, revolt, and escape.
this series prints zines, pamphlets, &c dealing with political, social and cultural topics
of interest to jewish anarchists and our friends

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