

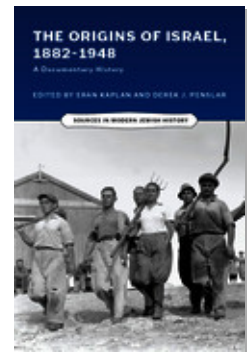


PROJECT MUSE®

The Origins of Israel, 1882–1948

Derek J. Penslar

Published by University of Wisconsin Press



➔ For additional information about this book

<http://muse.jhu.edu/books/9780299284930>

Yizkor (1920)

BERL KATZNELSON

Berl Katznelson (1887–1944) was one of the founders of the Labor Zionist movement in Palestine. A prolific writer and editor, after World War I Katznelson served as the chief ideologue of *Ahdut Ha-Avodah* and then of that party's successor, *Mapai*, founded in 1930.

In this short text about Jewish settlers killed at Tel Hai, Katznelson evokes but transforms the traditional Jewish memorial prayer for the dead, the *Yizkor*, into a secular commemoration of heroes of the nation. (On the battle of Tel Hai, see document 38.) God does not appear in the prayer, and Israel, the Jewish people, will be the agent of the land's future redemption. The eight fallen men and women are presented as tillers of the soil, determined to acquire the Land of Israel for the Jewish people through gradual settlement, not violent conquest. (As one of the fallen, Aharon Sher, put it, "A place once settled is not to be abandoned."¹)



Let the people of Israel remember the pure souls of its sons and daughters:

Shneur Saposnik,²

Aharon Sher³

Devora Drechler

Source: Kuntress, vol. 29 (Adar 1920), repr. in *Yalkut Ahdut Ha-Avodah* (Tel Aviv, 1920), 1:211.
Translated by Marganit Weinberger-Rotman.

Binyamin Munter
[Wolff] Scharff⁴
Sarah Chizik
[Ya'akov] Tocker⁵
Joseph Trumpeldor

Loyal and brave, men and women of peace and labor, who tilled the land and sacrificed their lives for the honor and glory of the people of Israel and for the Land of Israel.

Let the nation remember them and be blessed with such progeny. Let us bemoan the flowering youth, the glorious valor, willing sacrifice, and total dedication that were lost in the heavy battle.

Our mourning shall not cease or abate until the day that Israel redeems its despoiled land.

NOTES

1. Anita Shapira, *Land and Power: The Zionist Resort to Force, 1881–1948* (New York, 1992), 102.
2. Saposnik had been killed earlier, on December 12, 1919.
3. Three weeks before the battle, Sher was killed in a confrontation with Arab marauders in Tel Hai's fields.
4. First name missing in original.
5. First name missing in original.

On the Iron Wall (1923)

VLADIMIR JABOTINSKY

“On the Iron Wall” became one of the cornerstones of Zionist Revisionist thought. It was one of the first instances in which a Zionist leader addressed the Arab question in Palestine from a political and national perspective. The article underscored Jabotinsky’s belief that force and military power should be at the core of the Zionist movement’s policies, and it revealed his aversion to any sort of political or ideological compromise. (On Jabotinsky see document 23.) The article first appeared in *Rassvet* (Dawn), an émigré Jewish-Russian periodical, which was published in Berlin and later in Paris, and which Jabotinsky headed between 1922 and 1934.



Contrary to the good rule of beginning an article with the crux of the matter, I have to begin this one with an introduction, and a personal one too. The author of these lines is considered an enemy of the Arabs, a proponent of driving them out, etc. This is not true. My emotional attitude toward the Arabs is the same as to any other peoples—respectful indifference. My political attitude is dictated by two principles. First, I consider driving the Arabs out of Palestine, in whatever form, absolutely impossible; there will always be two peoples in Palestine. Second, I am proud of belonging to the group that formulated the Helsingfors Program.¹ We formulated it not for the Jews alone but for all peoples, and its basis is the equal rights of nations. Like everyone else, I am ready to swear, on

Source: Rassvet 42–43 (November 4, 1923). Translated by Denis Kozlov.

behalf of ourselves and our descendants, that we will never violate these equal rights and will never attempt driving out or oppressing [the Arabs]. As the reader can see, this credo is quite peaceful. However, the question of whether it is possible to achieve peaceful aims by peaceful means lies in a totally different dimension. Because this depends not on our attitude to the Arabs but instead exclusively on the attitude of the Arabs to Zionism.

Following this introduction, let us move to the crux of the matter.

I.

Voluntary reconciliation between the Palestinian Arabs and us is absolutely out of the question, whether now or in a foreseeable future. I state this conviction so harshly not because I like frustrating good people, but rather simply because they will not be frustrated: all those good people, except for those blind from birth, have long since realized themselves the complete impossibility of getting voluntary consent from the Arabs of Palestine to the transformation of that Palestine from an Arabic country into a country with a Jewish majority.

Every reader has a certain general idea of the history of colonization in other countries. I propose that he recall all the cases he knows; and let him, having gone through the entire list, find a single case when colonization proceeded upon the consent of the natives. There has never been such a case. Natives, be they cultured or uncultured, have always stubbornly fought against colonizers, be those cultured or uncultured. And the way the colonizer acted had no impact whatsoever on how the natives viewed him. The companions of Cortes or Pizarro or, for example, our forefathers in the days of Joshua ben Nun, behaved like robbers; however, the English and Scottish “father pilgrims,” the first true pioneers of North America, were invariably people of highest moral pathos who would not want to hurt a fly, let alone a redskin, and who earnestly believed that the prairie had enough room for the whites and for the reds. Yet the natives fought equally furiously against good and bad colonizers. The question of whether the country had a lot of free land was of no significance either. In 1921, there were estimated 340,000 redskins in the United States; but even in better times, not more than three-quarters of a million of them lived in the entire colossal territory from Labrador to the Rio Grande. There was no one in the world then with an imagination strong enough to foresee, in earnest, the danger of newcomers “driving out” the natives. The natives fought not because they were consciously and definitely afraid of being driven out, but rather because no colonization, nowhere, never, and for no native, is ever acceptable.

Every native people, be it civilized or savage, regards its country as its national home, where it wants to be and ever to stay complete master; and it will not let in voluntarily not only new masters but even new companions or economic partners.

This refers to the Arabs as well. Conciliators among us try to convince us that the Arabs are either fools who could be duped by a milder formulation of our true goals, or a venal tribe that will yield its primacy in Palestine to us for some cultural or economic benefits. I categorically refuse to share this view of the Palestinian Arabs. Culturally they lag 500 years behind us; spiritually they have neither our endurance nor our willpower; but this is where our internal differences end. They are just as good psychologists as we are; and just as us, they have been raised by centuries of intricate disputation [*pilpul*]: whatever we tell them, they understand the depths of our souls just as well as we understand theirs. And they treat Palestine at least with the same instinctive love and organic jealousy as the Aztecs treated their Mexico or the Sioux treated their prairie. The fantasy that they will voluntarily agree to the realization of Zionism in exchange for cultural or material conveniences, which the Jewish colonizer will bring them—this childish fantasy comes, with our “Arabo-philés,” from a certain preconceived contempt of the Arabic people, from a certain sweeping image of this race as venal rabble ready to give away their motherland for a good network of railroads. This image is completely unfounded. They say that individual Arabs are frequently venal, but that does not mean that the Palestinian Arabs as a whole are capable of selling their zealous patriotism, which even the Papuans did not sell. Every people struggles against colonizers, as long as there is at least a spark of hope for getting rid of the threat of colonization. Palestinian Arabs act and will act that way as well, as long as they retain at least a spark of hope.

II.

Many among us keep thinking naively that a certain misunderstanding has happened; that the Arabs have not understood us, and that is the only reason why they are against us; but if one could explain them what modest intentions we have, then they would stretch out their hand to us. That is a mistake, which has already been proven many times. Let me remind you of one case among many. Some three years ago Mr. Sokolow,² while he was in Palestine, delivered a long speech there about this very misunderstanding. He proved it clearly how badly mistaken the Arabs were if they thought that we were going to take their

property away, to expel them, or to oppress them; we do not even want a Jewish government, we only want a government representing the League of Nations. To this speech, the Arab newspaper *Al-Carmel*³ responded with an editorial, the idea of which I cite from memory but accurately enough. The Zionists need not to worry: there is no misunderstanding. Mr. Sokolow is telling the truth, but the Arabs understand it perfectly without his assistance. Of course, the Zionists do not currently dream either of driving the Arabs out, or of oppressing the Arabs, or of a Jewish government; of course they presently want only one thing: that the Arabs not impede their immigration. The Zionists promise that they will immigrate only in numbers that the economic capacity of Palestine allows. But the Arabs have never doubted that: look, this is a truism; otherwise immigration does not make sense. The Arab editor is even ready to admit that the economic capacity of Palestine is very large, i.e., that the country can accommodate any number of Jews without driving a single Arab out. The Zionists want “only that”—and this is precisely what the Arabs do not want. Because then the Jews will become a majority; and then a Jewish government will naturally emerge; and then the fate of the Arabic minority will depend on the good will of the Jews; and Jews themselves tell very eloquently how uncomfortable it is to be a minority. Therefore, there is no misunderstanding. The Jews want only one thing—freedom of immigration; and that Jewish immigration is precisely what the Arabs do not want.

This reasoning by the Arab editor is so simple and clear that it would be worth learning it by heart and making it a basis, from now on, for all our deliberations on the Arab question. The problem is by far not in whose words—those of Herzl or those of Samuel⁴—we will explain our efforts of colonization. Colonization itself carries its own explanation, the only one, inseparable and clear to each healthy Jew and each healthy Arab. Colonization can have only one goal; for the Palestinian Arabs this goal is unacceptable; all this is in the very nature of things, and to change this nature is impossible.

III.

Many consider the following plan very attractive: to have Zionism recognized not by the Palestinian Arabs, since that is impossible, but rather by the rest of the Arabic world, including Syria, Mesopotamia, and Hedjaz, if not Egypt itself. Even if this were conceivable, it still would not change the principal situation: in Palestine itself the Arabs would keep treating us the same way. The unification of Italy was once purchased at a price of, among other clauses, Trento and

Trieste staying under the Austrian power; yet not only did the Italian inhabitants of Trento and Trieste not reconcile themselves to this, but rather they redoubled their efforts in struggle against Austria. Even if it were possible (which I doubt) to persuade the Arabs of Baghdad and Mecca that Palestine is for them no more than a small insignificant hinterland; even then, for the Palestinian Arabs, Palestine would still be not a hinterland but rather their only motherland, the center and bulwark of their own national existence. Therefore, in that case as well, colonization would have to be carried out against the will of the Palestinian Arabs; that is, in the same conditions as today.

But an agreement with the non-Palestinian Arabs is also an unrealistic dream. In order for the Arabic nationalists of Baghdad, Mecca, and Damascus to agree paying us such a serious price as would be, for them, abandoning the maintenance of the Arabic nature of Palestine—that is, the land that lies at the very center of the “federation” and cuts it in two—in order for that to happen, we must offer them an extraordinarily valuable equivalent. Clearly, there are only two forms of such an equivalent: either money or political help, or both together. But we cannot offer them either the one or the other. As for money, it is ridiculous to think that we will be able to finance Mesopotamia or Hedjaz when we do not even have enough for Palestine. It is clear for a child that these countries, with their cheap labor, will find capital simply on the market, and they will find it much more easily than we will for Palestine. All talks on this topic of material support are either childish self-delusion or negligent light-mindedness. And it would be completely negligent on our part to talk about political support for Arab nationalism. Arab nationalism aspires to the same goals as, for example, Italian nationalism did prior to 1870—to unification and national independence. Translated into plain language, this means the ousting of England from Mesopotamia and Egypt, the ousting of France from Syria, and then perhaps also from Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco. On our part, helping this at least remotely would be at the same time suicidal and treacherous. Our basis is the English Mandate; and France has signed the Balfour Declaration in San Remo.⁵ We cannot participate in a political intrigue whose goal is to drive England away from the Suez Canal and to annihilate France completely as a colonial power. Not only is it impermissible to play such a double game, it is impermissible even to think about it. We will be crushed—with all due shame—before we can even move in this direction.

To conclude: we cannot offer any compensation for Palestine either to the Palestinian or to any other Arabs. Therefore, a voluntary agreement is impossible. Therefore, people who consider such an agreement a *conditio sine qua non* of Zionism, may already now say, *non*, and abandon Zionism. Our

colonization should either stop or continue against the will of the native population. And this is why it may continue and develop only under the protection of a force independent of the local population—an iron wall, through which the local population cannot break.

This is the essence of our entire policy toward the Arabs: not only “should it be the essence,” but also it is indeed the essence, no matter how hypocritical we may be about it. What for is the Balfour Declaration? What for is the Mandate? Their meaning for us is that a foreign power has taken an obligation to create in the country such conditions of governance and security, under which the local population, however much it desires that, would not be able to obstruct our colonization, administratively or physically. And we all, without exception, daily urge that power to fulfill those obligations firmly and relentlessly. In this respect, there is no substantial difference between our “militarists” and our “vegetarians.” Some prefer an iron wall to be made of Jewish bayonets; others prefer it to be made of Irish bayonets; others still, the proponents of an agreement with Baghdad, are ready to be satisfied with Baghdad bayonets (a strange and risky taste); yet all of us solicit the iron wall day and night. However, at the same time we, for some reason, undermine our own cause by proclamations about an agreement, trying to persuade the mandatory that the problem is not in the iron wall but rather in yet more and more talks. These proclamations ruin our cause; and therefore discrediting them, showing their illusory nature and their insincerity, is not only a pleasure but a duty as well.

IV.

The question is not exhausted, and I will come back to some of its aspects in the next article. Yet here I deem it necessary to make two more comments.

First of all, to the run-down reproach that the above standpoint is unethical, I respond: this is not true. It is one or the other: either Zionism is moral or it is immoral. We were to resolve this issue for ourselves before we took the first shekel. And we resolved it positively. And if Zionism is moral, which means just, then justice has to be done, regardless of anyone’s agreement or disagreement. And if A, B, or C want to obstruct by force the rendition of justice, because they find it unprofitable for themselves, then it is necessary to stand in their way, also by force. This is the ethic, and no other ethic exists.

Secondly, all this does not mean that *no* agreement is possible with the Palestinian Arabs. It is only *voluntary* agreement that is impossible. As long as the Arabs have a spark of hope to get rid of us, they will not sell this hope for

any sweet words or any nutritious sandwiches, precisely because they are not rabble but rather a people, very backward, yet living. A living people yields in such enormous, fatal issues only when no single loophole is visible in the iron wall. It is only then that the radical groups, whose slogan is “never ever,” lose their charm and influence passes over to moderate groups. Only then will those moderates approach us offering concessions; only then will they honestly bargain with us about practical issues, such as a guarantee against expulsion, or equal rights, or national peculiarities; and I believe and hope that then we will be able to give them such guarantees, which will assuage them; and the two peoples will be able to live side by side peacefully and in an orderly fashion. Yet the only way to such an agreement is the iron wall, i.e., the strengthening, in Palestine, of an authority inaccessible to any Arab influences, i.e., exactly that against which the Arabs are fighting. In other words, the only way for us to an agreement in the future is absolute rejection of all attempts at an agreement in the present.

NOTES

1. The Helsingfors (Helsinki) Program, which Jabotinsky helped draft, addressed both general Russian political issues as well as Jewish political concerns. The program advocated liberalizing Russian politics by introducing universal, secret ballots in the election of government officials. The program asserted the principle of states as federations of autonomous national groups. On the Jewish front, the Helsingfors Program called on the Russian government to recognize the Jewish nation as well as the right of Jews to self-administer various aspects of Jewish life. The program called among other things for the creation of a Jewish national assembly; the right to use Hebrew and Yiddish in Jewish institutions; and for recognizing the Sabbath as the Jews' day of rest.

2. Nahum Sokolow (1859–1936) was a Zionist leader, author, and journalist. Born to a rabbinic family in Poland, he began writing for the Hebrew paper *Ha-Tsefirah* at the age of seventeen (he later became the paper's editor and co-owner). In 1906, Sokolow became the secretary general of the World Zionist Congress. In 1921, he was elected chairperson of the Zionist Executive, and from 1931 until 1935 he served as president of the Zionist Organization.

3. *Al-Carmel* was an Arabic weekly newspaper that was founded in 1908 by Najib Nassar, with the stated purpose of opposing Zionist colonization and alerting the Arab public inside and outside Palestine of the dangers posed by the Jewish national movement. In 1911, the paper published a sixteen-part series called “Zionism: Its History, Objective, and Importance.”

4. Herbert Samuel (1870–1963), a British Jew and a supporter of the Zionist movement, was appointed High Commissioner of Palestine in 1920 and served in that post until 1925. While his appointment drew sharp criticism from the British military leaders in Palestine, Samuel's tenure was marked by his efforts at neutrality in dealing with the Arab and Jewish communities.

5. The San Remo Conference (April 19–26, 1920) was a meeting of the Allied Supreme Council and attended by the prime ministers of Britain, France, and the host country Italy. The conference approved the framework of a peace treaty with Turkey, and it determined the allocation of Class A League of Nations Mandates over previously Ottoman-ruled regions of the Middle East.

Platform for Judeo-Arab Accord (1930)

CHAIM MARGALIT-KALVARISKY

Chaim Margalit-Kalvarisky (1867–1947) was a veteran of the First Aliyah and devoted his life to the seemingly contradictory causes of Zionist land purchase and Jewish–Arab coexistence in Palestine. Before World War I, while working as an administrator and land-purchase agent for the Jewish Colonization Association, Kalvarisky developed close ties with many rural Arab notables, and during the 1920s, he was the Zionist Executive’s chief Arabist. Kalvarisky simultaneously bought land from Arabs (including lands whose tenants were forced to leave) and strove to purchase Arab goodwill through bribery. Yet he shunned any alliance between Zionism and Western imperialism and sought to maximize Jewish and Arab integration in what he thought would be a common Semitic homeland. In 1925, Kalvarisky was a founder of Brit Shalom, a group of a few score Jews, most of them Central European, who were willing to renounce the claim to an autonomous Jewish national home in favor of a binational polity.

This document, written in the shadow of the 1929 riots, is typical of many manifestos penned by Kalvarisky in its energy, optimism, and curious blend of far-sightedness and wishful thinking.



Source: Central Zionist Archive, Jerusalem, A113/13. August 4, 1930. Translated by Marganit Weinberger-Rotman.

Of all the ancient Semitic tribes and races who had reached the apex of development in antiquity and had founded powerful kingdoms—Babylonians, Assyrians, Aramaeans and Canaanites, Jews and Arabs, only the two last mentioned have survived. Aram and Canaan have long disappeared, while Assyrians and Babylonians are mere names in the archaeological records. The Arabs have conquered a large continent extending from the Taurus Mountains to the Persian Gulf as far past as the Indian Ocean, and westward as far as the Straits of Gibraltar, including the whole continent of North Africa. They have evolved a high civilization wherever they went, and when Europe went through its darkest period of history, the Arabs and the Jews who lived in their midst were practically the sole carriers of the torch of enlightenment in the world. Those were the heydays of Arab civilization. Since then a gradual decadence set in. More powerful and virile forces have since overpowered them. Many of them came under foreign tutelage, but to this day the Arab race remains strong. It numbers several millions and occupies expanses of land in several continents that are comparable in magnitude to those of the greatest Empire in recorded history. Their rich language, which is a kindred language to Hebrew, but which is distinguished for a variety of dialects, is the link that unites the Arabs and renders them into one compact bloc.

The fate of the other Semitic tribe that has survived and that in one time played a prominent role in the history of the world was very different. The Jews have not only lost their political liberty but were expelled from their land by Romans, Babylonians, and Byzantine conquerors who treated them cruelly and scattered them to all the four corners of the world. This long Diaspora has had a double effect upon them; a good effect and a bad effect. Under the influence of European nations who have attained a high pitch of economic and cultural development, the Jews too have attained considerable height in wealth and in culture. In Europe, the Jews are distinguished in all spheres of human endeavors. Economically, too, they play a leading and prominent role. While the anti-Semites' allegation that the Jews monopolize the key position in the economic life of their respective countries is certainly exaggerated, there is no denying their considerable influence upon the economy of the world.

Nor do they take a back seat in scientific and intellectual endeavors, and their influence on the press and literature is particularly marked, while their influence on political life, though smaller, is not at all negligible. All these are favorable factors from which individual Jews have benefited from the ability and industry of the Jews [*sic*].

But the Jewish Diaspora was not without its negative aspects. It has adversely affected the development of the Jewish people as a nation. In order to

exist within the nations whose hospitality they enjoyed, the Jew had to adapt himself to the mentality and habits of his environment, to speak the language of his neighbor and, what is worse, he very often had to abandon his Jewish and Semitic mentality and adopt that of his Aryan neighbor, and not infrequently to think like his anti-Semitic neighbor. He gradually came to abandon his national faculties, to forget his language and national traits, and to assimilate those of his neighbors. The link between one Jewish Territorial Concentration and another has gradually weakened, and there is a danger of this Semitic race completely disappearing from the world. The best minds in the Jewish people have viewed the future of this people with grave anxiety but it was beyond their power to check the disintegrating process. Most European and American states granted their Jewish citizens civic emancipation and the process of assimilation wrought havoc in Jewish quarters; many were the Jews who sought salvation in apostasy and many more, who formally remained faithful to their religion, endeavored to look like the non-Jews in whose midst they lived.

In these dire days of stress, some of the Jewish intellectuals raised the banner of Zion. They pleaded that as long as Jews remained in countries alien to them, among alien cultures of non-Semitic people, so long will they assimilate the national characteristics of those people until they will ultimately reach a stage of complete self-effacement. They pleaded that there was no other way open to them save that of return to their original land, to the Orient, to their ancient homeland that was in part inhabited by their brothers in race, the Arabs, with a view to the resettlement, cultivation, and the restoration of their own culture in an unadulterated national atmosphere. This was the only course open to the Jews if they were to save the Jewish Semitic race from complete national extermination.

The early pioneers of fifty years ago were confident that their Arab brethren would welcome this, and they were not be disappointed. Did not the Russian slave [*sic*] aid their Bulgarian brethren in their fight against their Turkish overlords?¹ Did not nations aid nations? I have had occasion to state elsewhere that but the help given us by Arab officials before the war in the consummation of our colonization endeavors, we would not have managed to survive the numerous administrative restrictive measures devised by the Turkish Authorities against Jewish colonization.

The Arabs had instinctively felt that Jewish immigration to this land, so far from resulting in any injury to them, was indeed highly beneficial. During the war [World War I], when all mankind underwent untold misery, when both Jews and Arabs were literally straying in the streets of Palestinian towns, they extended to one another a helping hand. In several places Jews opened soup

kitchens that catered to the poor and the needy irrespective of race and creed, and in other places they opened schools for Arab children only. There was a true and sincere rapprochement and educated people on both sides took to planning a system of mutual cooperation and even a political concordat between the two people. Some of the leaders of both parties have even discussed the possibility of an autonomous Palestine within the Arab Confederation, something along the lines of Croatia, within Hungary, or Galicia in the defunct pre-war Austrian Monarchy. Had these discussions been allowed to continue normally and unhampered, it may be assumed that the two races would have reached a true rapprochement and would have helped one another in the attainment of their goals. I am confident that had the Arabs been a truly independent nation, then they would have been moved by their national instincts and by considerations of national interests to secure a rapprochement with the Jews and aid in their effort to achieve national restoration on the land of their common ancestors. But to our regret the Arabs are not independent and have grown extremely suspicious since the war. (In his aspirations to full political liberty he fails to see or refuses to see that the Jews do not come to Palestine as conquerors seeking predominance over anybody, but as true sons of their country returning to their homeland in order to restore it to its erstwhile glory by sheer hard labor in conjunction with the people settled in it.) The Arab is well aware that Jewish immigration to Arab territories in general and to Palestine in particular is unlikely to endanger his position; yet he continues to fear that the Jew in Palestine is a tool in the hands of European imperialists who seek to dominate them, through the Jew. This is indeed at the root of Arab opposition to Jews.

As a matter of fact, the Arabs are not afraid of the Jews, and in their heart of hearts are indeed sympathetic to them because of a racial and religious affinity with them and because of a common mentality, but they are chary of Europe and the Europeans. To remove this misunderstanding it is our duty first to declare that Zionism is not a tool for imperialistic ends. Zionism is an end in itself; a straight and honest objective in the realization of which all Semites are interested. This object is to enable a Semitic race, or rather to such section of the race as has remained loyal to the Semitic tradition and as has been unwilling or unable to assimilate with the peoples within whom it has lived; a safe refuge where it would work and develop its cultural life unhampered. We further have to declare that the ideal of the Arab nationalists to establish an Arab Confederation is not at all in conflict with our own ideal to establish in Palestine a national home for the Jewish people. Jews and Arabs are brothers and should be able to live together within the confines of one state and one federation. As in Russia and Germany, where there are Russians and Ukrainians, Prussians and

Bavarians, but are all of the same race, so here too the main factor should be that we are all of the same race. I believe that the Jews will have no objection to joining a federation of Arab states, provided the Arabs will not restrict their work in Palestine. They seek no special privileges in Palestine, but a strict equality of status. There should be one law and one authority for both of them. Palestine was once theirs, and in the millennia of dispersion they have never given up the hope to return to it. Thirteen centuries ago, you the Arabs have conquered this land from those who have conquered it from us. We are fortunate in that the legacy of our ancestors has not gone into altogether strange hands. The last decade or so has brought new reforms in its wake, but the road is open to us and we can both of us, worthy of both of us. Let us proceed and do it. You should know that we want to dispossess or oust no one, neither the *fellah*, nor the *effendi*, nor the Arab workman; we only want to occupy and develop that which is unoccupied and undeveloped.

I therefore propose a general Judeo-Arab Covenant on the following foundations:

- (1) The two Semitic races, Jews and Arabs, undertake to help one another in all spheres of human endeavor, economic, social, and cultural.
- (2) The Arabs welcome their Jewish brethren returning to the east, the ancient homeland, and throw open the gates of their extensive territories to Jewish immigration.
- (3) In consideration of this, Jews will do their utmost in giving their resources, energy, and experience toward the development of the Semitic East and toward its progress to a great future.
- (4) In all the Oriental lands where Jews will reside, they will have the same rights accorded to national minorities in the more advanced Europeans [*sic*], e.g., Czechoslovakia, etc.
- (5) In view of its past and its association to the two Semitic peoples and to the three faiths, Palestine will form an autonomous unit with a special constitution. That constitution will postulate the formation of Palestine into a uni-racial but not a uni-national territory, which will belong not to one or another of the Semitic races, but to both of them jointly and equally irrespective of which of them forms the majority and which forms the minority at any given time.
- (6) Within the boundaries of this territory, the Hebrew language shall have equal rights with the Arab language. Jewish culture

- and Arab culture shall develop side by side in perfect and undisturbed harmony.
- (7) The Jews shall declare that they have no intention of dominating anyone in Palestine nor of hampering the development of Palestinians other than Jews, but they will desire that no one shall dominate them or hamper their own development.
 - (8) The Jews shall undertake not to dispossess their Arab fellah nor prejudice the rights of the Arab workman. So far from their entertaining any such intentions, they will be a great cultural effort, endeavor to improve the deplorable condition of the fellah, and will offer the Arab workman employment where he has had none before. So far, the country at large and the Arabs in particular have benefited directly and indirectly from Jewish immigration. In future, Jewish organizations will have to be established with a view to enhancing the indirect interests of the Arabs in Jewish activity.
 - (9) The Jews undertake not to oppose national aspirations of the Arabs. Should a federation of Arab states be formed in the Near East, Palestine could form part of this federation because nothing will add more happiness to the Jew than the glory and regeneration of the Semitic race.

The above are the main clauses of an accord upon which the Judeo-Arab Covenant must be based. They form only a nucleus covenant to which other clauses may be added but from which nothing may be deducted.

The dangers to which the Arabs are allegedly exposed as a result of Jewish work are imaginary, not real. The penetration into Semitic countries in general and into Palestine in particular of a Semitic race will result in no danger to the Arabs. On the contrary, it will contribute to its vigor and to its inherent strength. We Jews shall not thrust ourselves an [*sic*] alien growth upon the body politic of the Arabs, as many extreme nationalists believe, but we shall form a beautiful ring in the chain of the United Arab Confederation. The Arab Confederation does not alarm us. Therefore the sooner the Covenant is signed between us, the better for all of us, for us Jews as well as for you Arabs.

The present fraternal strife now waging between us is ruinous to us as well as to you. Our heart goes out to the many innocent victims that fell last year on both sides. Will there be an abatement of this bloody strife? In my view the time is ripe for a truce to be declared, for a hand of peace to be extended by one side

to the other. Some of the friends of the Arabs protest that the Jews stand in the way of Arab constitutional development and prevent them from a securing a legislative assembly; a handicap that is prejudicial to the interests of the people. To these protestations I shall counter by saying that time was when we Jews were anxious to have a legislative assembly² and you the Arabs refused to have it for various reasons. Now the tables have been turned. Is it any wonder? I think that in the present circumstances it is little wonder that Jews have grown apprehensive. But I believe that even on this issue an agreement may be reached provided there is mutual understanding. I admit that a legislative council may prove of considerable benefit to the country—if it conducts its work in a manner beneficial to all the people of the country, to its present as well as to its future population, but it can be a dangerous instrument if it conducts its work in a manner beneficial to one section only of the population. It can prove of invaluable benefit if it limits a full equality in the rights of the two races, but it will result in considerable injury if its promoters live up to the statement of one of their leaders before the Shaw Commission,³ “We have not protested at the Seventh Congress at the Balfour Declaration, neither have we asked for its cancellation, because we have insisted on the establishment of a parliament, which amounts to the same thing.” The Arabs had better know that no Jew could concur in a parliament that would invalidate the Balfour Declaration. But the truth is that those who have recommended at the Seventh Congress⁴ that the Arabs should neither protest against the Balfour Declaration nor ask for its cancellation have not sought to deceive anyone. I know them well as of honesty and integrity. They have deplored and bemoaned the internecine strife that has been going on between the two parties and are anxious to form a bridge between the two Semitic races. It is with regret that I have to state that neither party was quick to seize the extended hand of peace, and meanwhile we have had the Wailing Wall issue that has resulted in many innocent casualties on both sides. The time has come for a proper appreciation for the situation and for each party to declare openly that which it believes. I say: Jews are not opposed to a legislative council. In our present situation as a minority in the country, we are not unmindful of the many handicaps of such an institution to the Jews. Nevertheless, we should not oppose it if we are given adequate guarantee that it will not be abused with a view to hampering the development of the national home in Palestine. That is, for the time being. And if after these lapse of a certain period of cooperation in the legislative forum and in the political life of the country we are satisfied that you have no intention of restricting our development, and we are convinced that the legislative assembly will prove

of benefit to the two races alike, I am confident that we shall aim at an even greater measure of political cooperation with a view to widening the platform of joint political endeavor in the country.

NOTES

1. The Russo-Turkish war of 1877–78 resulted in, among other things, the emergence of an autonomous Bulgarian principality within the Ottoman Empire.
2. In the early 1920s, the British Mandatory government attempted to create a legislative body that would represent both Jews and Arabs, but it foundered over the issues of how delegates would be chosen (via governmental appointment or direct election), the ratio of Jews to Christian and Muslim Arabs, and, most important for the Arabs, whether participation in the council presupposed acceptance of the terms of the British Mandate, which promised to foster the growth of a Jewish national home. In 1928, leaders of the two main Palestinian political factions agreed to pursue the idea of a legislative council, and Arab support for such a body increased in the early 1930s, mainly as a means of putting a lid on Jewish immigration. It was precisely for this reason that most Zionists opposed the idea of a joint legislative council.
3. The British commission of inquiry that investigated the causes and events of the 1929 disturbances.
4. The Seventh Palestine-Arab Congress was convened in Jerusalem in June 1928.

On the Partition of Palestine (1937)

DAVID BEN-GURION

This letter, written by Ben-Gurion from London to his adolescent son, Amos, has acquired a good deal of notoriety in Middle Eastern historiography. It has been cited as evidence that Ben-Gurion consciously planned the expulsion of the Palestinians a decade before Israel's War of Independence. The letter is published in full here for the first time.

The factual background to this letter was the Peel Commission's recommendation in July 1937 that Palestine be partitioned into Jewish and Arab states. The Peel Commission also recommended that where possible Arabs were to be moved from the Jewish to the Arab state and vice versa. In fact, the population transfer would be almost entirely unilateral, with more than 200,000 Arabs being moved versus just over 1,000 Jews.

The proposal divided the Zionist leadership. Some accepted it; others rejected partition in any form; and still others were willing to accept partition in principle but were discontent with the amount of territory allotted to the Jewish state. Ben-Gurion cautiously adopted the first position, arguing to his party's executive committee that a Jewish state within the biblical Land of Israel was not a final goal and that some day the state would include Transjordan and southern Lebanon.¹ The third position prevailed at the World Zionist Congress that met in Geneva in August. Amos took the second, fully oppositional position. At the time, Amos belonged to a Zionist youth movement, Ha-Mahanot Ha-Olim (the Ascending Camps), which was affiliated with Ha-Kibbutz ha-Me'uhad (United Kibbutz movement), whose leader, Yizhak Tabenkin, believed that

Source: Ben-Gurion Archive (correspondence), Sede Boker, October 5, 1937. (Many thanks to Motti Golani for this document.) Translated by Marganit Weinberger-Rotman.

socialist values and territorial maximalism were mutually reinforcing (see document 37). A minuscule Jewish state, it was feared, would lack the resources and the security to develop a stable socialist economy and society. Moreover, unlike Ben-Gurion, many Zionists on the left as well as right of the social spectrum were unwilling to make even a pragmatic concession to the Jews' historic claim to the entire Land of Israel.

Ben-Gurion wrote a prodigious number of letters and diary entries, which he usually viewed as a form of self-documentation for dissemination and eventual publication (as was, in fact, often the case). Thus this letter could be seen not as a private exchange of ideas between father and son so much as a political statement, or an attempt to convince not only Amos, but many others, of the viability of partition, particularly in terms of the quantity of land that would be available for Zionist settlement. According to this interpretation, Ben-Gurion's territorial maximalism would have been purely rhetorical. Whether or not this is true, in years to come Ben-Gurion tried to conceal his earlier support for taking territory east of the Jordan River, and this letter was deleted from the 1968 Hebrew edition of Ben-Gurion's correspondence.² Similarly ambiguous was the intent of—and intended audience for—Ben-Gurion's musings in this letter on the possibility of forcibly transferring Arabs from Palestine in the case of partition.



Dear Amos,

I was not mad at you; I was only very sad not to have received an answer from you. I cannot accept your excuse that you had no time. I know you are busy at school, in the field and at home, and I am pleased that you are studying, but one can always find a free hour when there's need. Not only on Saturdays, but during the week, too.

Similarly, your excuse that I wander from country to country is not convincing. You can write to me in London. Here, they always know where I am, and they forward my mail regularly.

As for the question of my membership in the Executive Committee,³ I will explain it to you when we meet in person, if I find you still in Tel Aviv on my return. I will only comment briefly on the split between logic and feeling when it comes to matters of state. Politics is not a matter of sentiment. The only consideration is what's good and beneficial for us. Which road will lead us to our goal. Which policy will strengthen us, and which will be a detriment.

I have feelings too, or I would not have been able to endure this difficult work for dozens of years. And my feelings are not hurt by the idea of establishing a Jewish state, however small. It goes without saying that I do not favor the partition of the land, but the land to be divided is not in our hands; it is in the hands of the British and the Arabs. We hold only a small fraction of it, less than

what is offered for the Jewish state. If I were an Arab, my feelings would be seriously hurt. But the fact is, in the partition plan, we receive more than what we own, though less, much less, than what we deserve and want. But the question is whether we would get more without partition? If the status quo remains, will our “feelings” be satisfied? What we want is not to keep the country one and whole, but that the one and whole country will be Jewish. I have no use for a Greater Palestine that is Arab.

For us, the status quo is poison; we need a change in the situation. How will this change come about? How can we establish our own state?

The crucial question is whether the establishment of a Jewish state would help or prevent turning this country into a Jewish country?

My assumption is—and this is why I am an ardent supporter of establishing a state even if it involves a partition now—that a Jewish state on part of the land is not a final status; it is just the beginning. When we purchase a thousand or ten thousand dunams, we rejoice and our feelings are not hurt because we did not purchase the entire land. The purchase is important not only in itself; it also helps us go from strength to strength and this empowerment helps lead us to purchasing the entire country. Establishing a state, even a partial one, maximizes our forces, and it will contribute to our historical effort to redeem the entire country.

We will admit as many Jewish immigrants as we can. We firmly believe that we can bring more than two million here. We’ll establish a multifaceted economy: agricultural, industrial, commercial, naval, etc. We’ll build sophisticated armed forces, an excellent military—I am sure our army will be among the best in the world—and then we’ll be able to settle in the other parts of the country, either through mutual agreement with our Arab neighbors or through other means.

We mustn’t lose sight of some basic facts that enable us to settle in Palestine; it is not the British Mandate, nor the Balfour Declaration—these are corollaries, not causes, temporary, ephemeral events. They could just as well not happen. Were it not for the First World War or the way it ended, the mandate and the declaration would not have occurred. But there are fundamental historical facts that are immutable as long as Zionism is not fully realized. These are:

1. The afflictions in the Diaspora, which impel Jews to immigrate to Palestine.
2. The fact that the land is largely uninhabited. There is great potential for settlement in areas that the Arabs don’t need and are not capable of settling (because they do not need them). There is no problem of Arab immigration, there is no Arab

Diaspora and the Arabs are not persecuted. They have a country, a vast country of their own.⁴

3. Jewish talent and inventiveness (a result of reason No. 1), the Jews' ability to make the desert bloom, create industry, build an economy, develop culture, conquer the air and the sea using science and pioneering efforts.

These basic facts will be greatly helped by the existence of a Jewish state in part of Palestine, just as the Zionist movement is helped by every conquest, small and large, every new school, factory, boat, etc.

If we have a state, we'll be able to populate the land, outnumber the Arabs, and accelerate building and expansion. The more our forces grow, the sooner the Arabs will realize that they cannot and should not oppose us. They will rather take advantage, both politically and materially, of the Jewish presence.

I am not a dreamer and I do not like wars. I have always believed—even before the option of a state materialized—that when we are strong and numerous in the country, the Arabs will realize how beneficial an alliance with us can be; if they let us settle in all parts of Palestine, they can benefit from our help. The Arabs have many countries, sparsely populated, undeveloped and unprotected. Without France, Syria could not withstand Turkey for one day. The same applies to Iraq and the new state. They all need the protection of France and Britain. But such protection implies subjugation and dependence. The Jews could be equal allies, true friends, not conquerors and tyrants.

Let's assume that the Negev is not included in the Jewish state. It will remain a barren desert because the Arabs do not need it and are incapable of developing it. They have plenty of other deserts, and they lack the manpower, the money and the initiative. It is quite possible that in exchange for financial, military, organizational, and scientific aid they will allow us to develop and build the Negev. But then again, maybe not. Nations don't always act according to reason and in their best interest. Just as you maintain that there is a dichotomy between reason and feelings, perhaps the Arabs will be motivated by counter-productive nationalistic sentiments and will tell us: "None of your honey, none of your sting, we'd rather the Negev stayed barren and desolate than have Jews settle in it." Then we'll have to speak to them in another language. And we will have that "language" which without a state could not exist. We should not accept that large uninhabited areas, which can accommodate thousands of Jews, would remain empty; we should not accept that Jews wouldn't be able to return to their homeland because Arabs choose not to allow either nation to settle there. We will have to expel the Arabs and take their place. Our national aspirations are based on the assumption—proven right since the start of our

settlement here—that there is enough room for both the Arabs and ourselves in Palestine, and if we need to resort to force—not in order to dispossess the Arabs of the Negev and Transjordan, but in order to guarantee our right to settle there—then we will have the power to do so.

It is quite possible in that case that we'll have to deal not only with the Palestinian Arabs but with the neighboring countries which will rush to help them against us, but we will be more powerful, not only because we are better organized and better equipped, but because our forces will be greater in both quantity and quality. We have a reservoir of troops in the Diaspora. Our younger generation now living in Poland, Romania, America and elsewhere will rush to join us if and when this conflict flares up—and I hope it never does. The Jewish state will not depend only on the Jews living within its borders, but on the entire Jewish people all over the world, on the millions who want and must live in Palestine. There are no millions of Arabs who want or must settle in Palestine. Of course, adventurers and Arab gangs from Syria and Iraq may come in, but they are no match for the hundreds of thousands of Jewish youths for whom the Land of Israel is not just a matter of “feelings” but also a question of personal and national life.

This is why I attach so much importance to reclaiming land from the sea, to building a Jewish port and a Jewish navy. The sea is the bridge between the Jews in Palestine and the millions in the Diaspora. We must prepare conditions that will allow our ships and our sailors to bring in thousands of youths, so we can train them—even while they are still living abroad—for any possible task in Palestine.

I am confident that establishing a Jewish state, even in part of the country, will allow us to accomplish that. If we build our own state, we will rule the sea, and much will be achieved.

This is why there is no split in my heart between reason and feeling. Both tell me: build a Jewish state now, even if it is not in the entire territory; the rest will come later—it must come!

When are you going back to Kedouri?⁵

Write to me.

Show this letter to your mother and to your sisters.

Best,
Dad

NOTES

1. Nadav G. Shelef, *Evolving Nationalism: Homeland, Identity, and Religion in Israel, 1925–2005* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2010), 30.

2. Ibid., 38.
3. Of the Jewish Agency.
4. Ben-Gurion's acceptance of Pan-Arab doctrine of a single, united, Arab nation well served Zionist purposes as it denied Palestinian Arabs a national identity and national rights.
5. An agricultural school in the Lower Galilee.

Platform (1942)

IHUD

In 1942, as news of the genocide of European Jewry penetrated the consciousness of the Yishuv and American Jewry, most Zionists reacted by demanding full-blown Jewish statehood in Palestine. Their reasoning, reflected in the Biltmore Program, was that nothing short would provide a guaranteed refuge for the survivors. A small group of prominent Zionists, however, responded differently, by stressing the need for a binational, Jewish–Arab state in Palestine as part of an Arab federation. Nothing short, they argued, would guarantee a bloody and endless war with the Arabs.

This latter approach was that of Ihud. Ideologically, Ihud was a successor to Brit Shalom, but it was more politically active, both within Palestine and in the international arena. Counting at most two hundred members, Ihud gained attention through the prominence of its members (e.g., philosophers Martin Buber and Ernst Simon, Rabbi Judah Magnes, Hadassah president Henrietta Szold, Yishuv leader and writer Moshe Smilansky). Ihud members were condemned by both mainstream Zionists and Palestinian nationalists: the former for being willing to cede the principles of a Jewish majority and Jewish statehood in Palestine; the latter for insisting on ongoing Jewish rights and needs in the wake of the Holocaust for immigration to the future binational state.

As this document demonstrates, Ihud was influenced by not only Jewish–Arab strife in Palestine but also the cataclysmic events of World War II and striving to create a strong, viable international body to prevent future war.



Source: Yosef Gorny, *Mediniyut ve-Dimyon: Tokhniyot Federaliyot ba-Mahashavah ha-Medit ha-Tsiyonit 1917–1948* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi and ha-Sifriyah Ha-Tsiyonit, 1993), 188–90. Used with permission. Translated by Marganit Weinberger-Rotman.

The purpose of this brochure is to present to the Jewish public the facts about Ihud, its inception, and its objectives. We do not wish to engage in a meaningless debate with that part of the Palestinian press that incites against us and tries to silence our voice. Our purpose is to tell the truth to those in the Yishuv and in Jewry who, like us, agonize over what happens in this country, and to humanity in general, and those, like us, who are trying to forge a new pathway to a new world. Readers of *Problems of the Day*¹ are familiar with the tenets of the Ihud Association. Dr. Y. L. Magnes² has published four articles there describing the situation in Palestine viewed against the background of world events. In his last article, he raised the banner of “union,” [ihud], first used by Abraham Lincoln. In order to promulgate this idea, a group of people has now convened, and this brochure presents their platform.

Our basic tenet is that we cannot triumph over the catastrophe now engulfing the world, unless we reject the unbridled nationalistic idea for a vision of cooperation and unity between nations, as expressed by President Roosevelt’s “Four Freedoms.”³ The unchecked egotism of a single nation is bound to lead to wars and further devastation, if not to total annihilation.

In the world at large, we are now witnessing the awakening of a strong movement seeking a real new order—not Hitler’s sham “new order,” which was only slavery. Nations are admitting their mistakes and repent their past sins. This movement is particularly prominent in the United States of America. Its spokesmen, Roosevelt, Hull,⁴ Wallace,⁵ all speak in this vein. They emphasize that the US has made a grievous mistake in thinking only of its own interests and not about its obligation to the rest of humanity. The world must be rid of the tyranny of isolationism and narrow nationalism and replace it with cooperation between nations. In this issue we bring you testimonies to these ideas expressed by the leaders of the Allies. We see in these concepts a ray of sunshine in these dark days of human history. This movement, seeking true liberty, is also the only hope for freedom and happiness for small nations, Israel among them.

As a small group of Jews in a country remote from the centers of the world, we do not presume to make declarations for the whole world. We cannot be leaders and guides to all mankind, but we believe that it behooves all nations of the world to participate in this political and spiritual revolution, not to wait for others to bail them out. We call upon the Jewish Yishuv and the Zionist movement to wake up and, as free agents, to join the united universal movement. The pioneers of the new world are sailing toward new horizons; we, the Israeli pioneers in the Land of Israel, should not allow ourselves to be mired in provincial, narrow-minded policies, which may jeopardize our future and

progress and isolate us from the vital forces of the Diaspora and from the best and brightest of the free world who are our only allies today.

We do not subscribe to the notion that only our nationality is sacred and worth preserving while battling against everyone else, including our friends. We see in the idea of unity—in Israel, in the Semitic world, in the entire free world—a means of salvation. Only unity and cooperation will bring long-lasting peace and happiness; only unity and cooperation will safeguard the essential national interests of the Jewish people.

At present, our main task is to take part in the war against the Nazis and their allies. Perhaps at the moment, no significant change is expected in the political arena, but we must prepare for the future, and it is quite possible that this future is closer than we think. Some in the British Parliament are saying that certain organizations are advocating a civil war in this country intending to conquer it by force in order to give it to the Jews; we deem this utter nonsense. No responsible nationalistic Jew would come up with such an idea, which is bound to bring disaster on the country and on the entire Zionist enterprise. The only way to ensure the future of the Land of Israel is by unity; we must redouble our efforts to enlist the help of those united nations that, after victory, will decide the shape of the world. We must prepare hearts and minds for that day; to lay the foundation for a radical change in international relations—these are the articles of faith of Ihud.

Ihud's Platform

The Ihud Association maintains connection to

- a. The Zionist movement sharing its desire to establish a Jewish homeland in the Land of Israel.
- b. The international movement that aspires to establish a new world order based on unity of nations, large and small, which will guarantee liberty, justice, and freedom from fear, oppression, and poverty.

In this spirit, the association approaches the fundamental questions of our country with hope for a unity between the Jewish and the Arab nations. We will seek ways for the Jewish world and the Arab world to cooperate in all aspects of life, social, economic, cultural, and political—for a renaissance of the Semitic world.

The major political aspirations of the “union” association are

- a. Creating a political system based upon equal rights for both peoples.
- b. Securing the support of the expanding Yishuv and the entire Jewish people for a federative union of the Middle East that includes the Land of Israel, which will guarantee the rights of all its member nations.
- c. Creating an alliance between this federative union and the Anglo-American union as part of an alliance of all free nations, when it comes into being.

This alliance of free nations, acting as the highest authority, will be responsible for establishing and maintaining proper international relations in the new postwar world.

The association will work together with various groups represented in the Jewish–Arab League for Rapprochement and Cooperation;⁶ it is also willing to work with other institutions and organizations in other areas.

NOTES

1. Between 1940 and 1942, this was the organ of the New Aliyah Party, which drew on recent Central European immigrants. In 1944 it became formally associated with the Ihud.

2. Judah Leon Magnes (1877–1948) was a prominent American Reform rabbi, the first rector of the Hebrew University, and a binational activist.

3. As laid out in President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s speech of January 6, 1941, all humans have inalienable freedoms of speech and religion, as well as freedom from want and fear.

4. Cordell Hull (1871–1955) was a long-serving secretary of state under Roosevelt and a central figure behind the founding of the United Nations.

5. Henry Wallace (1888–1965), a prominent progressive politician, was vice president in Roosevelt’s third term and held cabinet positions both before and after.

6. Brit Shalom dissolved in 1921, but much of its ideological legacy survived in the Jewish–Arab League for Rapprochement and Cooperation, which was founded in 1939. Like Ihud, the league’s supporters came from not only Brit Shalom but also radical Zionist parties such as Ha-Shomer Ha-Tsa’ir.