The Contradictory Legacy of Zionism: Radical Religious Groups

▶ Araştırma makalesi / *Research article*

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Abstract

Zionism initially emerged as a secular movement aimed at the national liberation of the Jewish people. Most Zionist leaders, known as the founding fathers, sought to dissociate Judaism from its religious identity and embed it within a modern nationalist framework. The desire to establish a national consciousness while sidelining religious teachings led to significant conflicts and schisms among both secular and religious Jewish communities. Aside from a small minority within religious groups, Zionism was largely rejected and scorned by religious Jews in its early days. However, the establishment of the state, particularly following the Six-Day War in 1967, paradoxically provided fertile ground for the rise of religious radicalism. Religious groups began interpreting the acquisition of sacred lands, such as Jerusalem and the West Bank, as a divine sign, advocating for Israel's expansion as a religious mission. This study will examine the contradictory legacy of Zionism, characterized by its secular, and at times anti-religious, ideology. Zionism continues to create deep divisions within Israeli society, perpetuating a persistent tension between secular and religious identities. Radical Zionist religious groups legitimize violence against Palestinians, sustaining a profound area of conflict in Israeli politics and settlement policies.

Keywords: Religious Zionism, Radicalism, Israel, Judaism.

Siyonizm'in Çelişkili Mirası: Radikal Dini Gruplar

Öz

Başlangıçta Siyonizm, Yahudi halkının ulusal kurtuluşunu amaçlayan seküler bir hareket olarak şekillenmiştir. Kurucu babalar olarak nitelendirilen çoğu Siyonist lider, Yahudiliği dini kimliğinden arındırarak modern ve milliyetçi bir bağlama oturtmaya çalışmıştır. Dini öğretileri geri planda bırakarak ulusal bir bilinç oluşturma arzusu hem seküler hem de dindar Yahudi topluluklar arasında derin çatışmalara ve akabinde bölünmelere neden olmuştur. Dini gruplar içinde azınlık denilebilecek kadar küçük bir topluluk dışında Siyonizm, ilk zamanlarda dindar Yahudiler tarafından desteklenmemiş bilakis hakir görülerek reddedilmiştir. Ancak devletin kurulması ve özellikle de 1967 Savaşı sonrası Siyonizm'in seküler temelleri, zamanla ironik bir biçimde dini radikalizmin yükselmesine de zemin hazırlamıştır. Kudüs ve Batı Şeria gibi kutsal toprakların ele geçirilmesini ilahi bir işaret olarak yorumlayan dindar gruplar, İsrail'in dini bir misyonla genişlemesi gerektiğini savunmaya başlamıştır. Bu süreçte irili ufaklı birçok radikal dini grup türemiş ve yabancı karşıtlığı zirve yapmıştır. Bu çalışmada da seküler hatta din karşıtı bir ideoloji olan Siyonizm'in bıraktığı çelişkili miras işlenmeye çalışacaktır. Zira Siyonizm İsrail toplumunda derin ayrılıklara yol açarak, devletin seküler ve dini kimlikleri arasında sürekli bir gerilim yaratmaya devam etmektedir. Radikal Siyonist dini gruplar, hem Filistinlilere karşı şiddet eylemlerini meşrulaştırmaya devam etmektedirler. Bu durum, İsrail siyasetinde ve Filistin topraklarındaki yerleşim politikalarında derin bir çatışma alanı olarak varlığını sürdürmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dini Siyonizm, Radikalizm, İsrail, Yahudilik.

Introduction

Zionism did not initially emerge from a deep religious attachment to the Holy Land or the spiritual significance of these territories. Rather, it developed as a reaction to the exclusion and discrimination experienced by Jews due to the rise of nationalist movements in Christian Europe. Zionism, framed as the only viable response to anti-Semitism, was perceived by its founders as the ultimate means of liberation for Jews from the confinements of the ghettos. During the early stages of Zionist thought, reactions to these ideas were far from homogeneous. Over time, various forms of Zionism have emerged. From its very inception, it is inaccurate to speak of a unified Zionist ideology. Broadly speaking, Zionism encompasses multiple strands, each characterized by fundamentally distinct ideological frameworks.

Initially, Political Zionism was predominantly driven by secular groups, largely composed of elites, who interpreted Judaism through a racial lens. These groups believed that without significant changes to traditional Jewish life, achieving equal treatment comparable to their fellow citizens in their respective countries would be impossible. Consequently, they embraced Zionism as the sole path to national salvation. The primary goal of Political Zionism was to establish a Jewish state in Palestine as a definitive solution to the existing Jewish question. Motivated by aspirations for global recognition and acceptance by the upper echelons of society, this movement favored diplomacy as a means of achieving its objectives, albeit with an underlying colonial perspective. However, during the early years when Political Zionist ideology gained prominence, devout religious Jews, who had long adhered to the tradition of exile, dismissed Zionism as a secular form of nationalism. They argued that true salvation could only be achieved through divine will. In response to the perceived threat of assimilation, these religious groups sought to fortify their existing beliefs and traditions as a means of resistance.

On the other hand, Revisionist Zionism, which geographically emerged in Eastern Europe and predominantly among Russian Jews, adopted a highly radical stance. The primary goal of this movement was to establish a Jewish state encompassing both banks of the Jordan River. Unlike Political Zionists, who sought collaboration with the world, Revisionists believed that the solution lay not in compromise but in warfare and armed resistance. Another type of Zionism that also arose in the same geographical region was Labor or Socialist Zionism, which advocated for the establishment of a socialist state in Palestine. Labor Zionists, fueled by a profound dissatisfaction with the weak image of Jews in the diaspora, aimed to leave this perception behind and create a strong, new Hebrew identity for Jews arriving during the early aliyahs. Emphasizing collective living and working principles, this movement was supported by structures such as moshavim and kibbutzim. These structures played a crucial role during the founding phase of the State of Israel, although they gradually lost their influence due to evolving economic and social conditions. Another distinct form of Zionism embraced a fundamentally different ideology, emphasizing the necessity of cultural transformation in society. This movement, known as Cultural or Spiritual Zionism, was shaped under the leadership of prominent thinkers such as Ahad Ha'am, Peretz Smolenskin, and Moses Hess. It centered on the revival of Jewish civilization, with the theme of "rebirth" at its core. The movement aimed to reconstruct

Jewish culture, language, and values, thereby laying the foundation for a renewed cultural identity.

Finally, among the various strands of Zionist movements, Religious Zionism occupies a significant position. This approach advocated for the establishment of a connection between Judaism and Zionism, presenting a framework that integrated both religious and national identities. Initially supported by only a small minority, this ideology was developed by the early representatives of modern Religious Zionism and, over time, gained broader acceptance with the belief that the Holy Land would once again become the center of Jewish life. Religious Zionism, as a movement aimed at fulfilling God's sacred promises, added a spiritual dimension to Zionist ideology. This perspective posited that Jews could be restructured and brought together in the Holy Land in accordance with divine will. Despite its fundamental differences with secular Zionist movements, it initially argued for the possibility of uniting around common goals. However, over time, these two opposing ideologies began to pursue divergent objectives, rendering their conflicts inevitable. As can be inferred, even before any concrete decisions were made, Zionism, rather than acting as a unifying force, caused shifts in traditional Jewish identity, leading to internal fragmentation within Judaism.

Like other nationalist movements, Zionism also drew upon religious, historical, and traditional sources to construct its theses. For centuries, Jews who spoke different languages and lived in diverse cultures and rituals across various geographies found a shared memory to be an indispensable resource for forging an ethnic and national identity with a stronger emphasis. Starting in the 1800s, waves of migration brought Jewish groups to the region, each with varying motivations and aspirations for their way of life. Political Zionists, recognizing that merely moving to the land in question would not suffice, prioritized the goal of creating a new Hebrew identity. In this context, the construction of a new generation coincided with the process of state-building. This prototype individual was envisioned as someone who spoke modern Hebrew, abandoned the traditional and passive image of Jews, and embodied a personality integrated with the world—strong, courageous, and determined. Religion, in this paradigm, was regarded more as a tradition; the Hebrew Bible was seen as a book of history and ancestry, respected but not actively engaged with. From the earliest migration waves, the shaping of this new generation became observable. However, Zionism's call for migration and transformation attracted only a limited segment of the global Jewish population to the region during this period. The minority status of Jews in the region compelled Zionist leaders to collaborate with incoming Jewish groups regardless of their identities or origins.

Driven by the intensifying force of anti-Semitism, migrations brought together a wide variety of Jewish groups—religious, secular, Western, and Eastern—into the region. Among these groups were devoutly religious Jews, primarily motivated by theological convictions. Despite their views being fundamentally opposed to those of Political Zionists, these differences largely went unnoticed during the early years. An atmosphere of silence prevailed, driven by factors such as ongoing wars, the collective effort to build a state, and the symbolic significance of returning to Zion after centuries of dispersion. However, this silence was both short-lived and superficial. Following the declaration of the State of Israel's independence in 1948, tensions surrounding the visibility of religion in state policies began to emerge. Certain religious Jewish groups actively sought to impose their own religious laws and practices

through various means, resulting in escalating internal conflicts. The true turning point, however, came after the Six-Day War, which many religious Jews interpreted as a manifestation of divine favor or a direct message from God. With the capture of holy sites, religious Jewish groups—empowered by newfound confidence—began advocating for a socio-political order grounded in ethno-religious exclusivity and strict adherence to *halakhaic* laws. This shift not only deepened the polarization between religious and secular Jews but also redefined the socio-political discourse within Israel. During this period, extremist religious Zionist factions and individuals emerged, frequently targeting secular Jews and non-Jews alike. These revanchist groups legitimized their actions through religious rhetoric, framing them as part of a "holy war." This revanchist mindset continues to persist, with religious narratives being instrumentalized to justify their actions. These radical actions continue to extend their influence across various spheres of Israeli society, ranging from politics to social life, maintaining their significance to this day.

1. From Messianism to Nationalism: The Evolution of Religious Zionism

The call for a return to the Promised Land, as articulated by Zionism, was initially perceived as an act of defiance by many rabbis, as it implied a breach of the tradition of exile and covenant. In traditional Orthodox Jewish belief, adherence to these two principles would eventually lead to the coming of the Messiah and the realization of the return to Zion. Conversely, the foundational myth of Zionism proposed a three-stage plan, with the initial step being the abrogation of exile (Heb. *sheilat ha-galut*). This would subsequently facilitate a return to the Land of Israel (Heb. *ha-shiva le-Eretz Yisrael*) and a reintegration into history (Heb. *ha-shiva la historia*).[1] In fact, the abrogation of exile, or the return to the Promised Land, has been a persistent theme in Jewish thought across centuries. However, the longing for these lands has always been accompanied by a remembrance of an idealized past. Nevertheless, the reattainment of this ideal past and the return to those lands can only occur through the will of God, and it is the Messiah who is expected to fulfill this future.[2] In this context, Zionism sought to diminish the vitality of the expectation of a divine return and the hope for the Messiah's arrival. While Zionist pioneers viewed the diaspora as a form of punishment and a state to be overcome, most Jews of that time did not interpret the diaspora as a curse. On the contrary, it was seen as a final stage of judgment and purification.[3]

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[1]   Gabriel Piterberg, *Siyonizmin Dönüşleri: Mitler, Siyaset ve İsrail'de Araştırmacılık* (İstanbul: İthaki, 2015), 20.

[2]   Esther Benbassa, Jean-Christophe Attias, *Paylaşılamayan Kutsal Topraklar ve İsrail* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2012), 163.

[3]   See Ezekiel, 20:34-38: "And I will bring you out from the people and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched-out arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face. Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord God. And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am the Lord." 41-44: "I will accept you as fragrant incense when I bring you out from the nations and gather you from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will be proved holy through you in the sight of the nations. Then you will know that I am the Lord, when I bring you into the land of Israel, the land I had sworn with uplifted hand to give to your ancestors. There you will remember your conduct and all the actions by which you have defiled yourselves, and you will loathe yourselves for all the evil you have done. You will know that I am the Lord, when

Additionally, the Jewish scholar Rashi regarded the diaspora as a blessing, arguing that it prevented the simultaneous annihilation of Jewish communities living in different regions.[4] He emphasized that the strong position of the Torah in Jewish memory was due to its role as a unifying force during the diaspora, and he urged that these periods should always be remembered positively.[5]

Throughout history, the Jewish people have interpreted all misfortunes and rewards they encountered as reflections of divine will. In this context, the decree of exile was seen as a divine command, a punishment for disobedience to God's laws, and was thus accepted throughout the period of the diaspora. Consequently, the return to Zion was viewed as possible not through human will but solely through the power of God, with the concept of the "Promised Land" retaining its meaning as both a spiritual direction and an abstract national identity. In the Hebrew Bible, the phrase "*I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or the does of the field, that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases*" (Song of Songs 2:7, 3:5, 8:4) is repeated three times and has been a frequently cited source in rabbinic discussions on exile. This expression is also mentioned in the Babylonian Talmud, where Rabbi Yossi interpreted it as representing three oaths that God took from Israel. The first of these oaths was that the Jewish people should not collectively migrate to Eretz Yisrael. The second was that the Israelites should not rebel against the nations under whose rule they lived. The third oath was a divine promise that other nations would not oppress Israel excessively.

Various rabbinic interpretations can be found concerning the three oaths. One of the early Tosafists, Ra'aven (1090-1170), warned that Jews who attempted to migrate to Palestine could be subject to the death penalty based on these oaths.[6] The Kabbalist Rabbi Ezra of Girona (1160-1238) also asserted that those who chose to migrate would be seen as having abandoned God.[7] Talmud commentator Jonathan Eybeschutz (1690-1764) prohibited collective migration to the Holy Land, even if permitted by all nations, unless the Messiah had arrived. Similarly, Moses Mendelssohn, known for his reformist endeavors, emphasized the importance of adhering to the three oaths. Indeed, during the diaspora, migration to Palestine occurred solely for religious purposes and on an individual basis; such migrations were not intended to hasten the coming of the Messiah or to be seen as a form of conquest. One of the most prominent figures who advocated for migration to Palestine was Nachmanides. He interpreted the verse from the Book of Numbers, "You shall take possession of the land and settle in it, for I have given it to you to possess," as implying that one of the 613 commandments (*mitzvot*) is to go to Eretz Yisrael and live there.

I deal with you for my name's sake and not according to your evil ways and your corrupt practices, you people of Israel, declares the Sovereign Lord."

[4] Tamar Amar-Dahl, *Zionist Israel and the Question of Palestine: Jewish Statehood and the History of the Middle East Conflict* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2017), 5.

[5] Eric Lawee, *Rashi's Commentary on the Torah: Canonization and Resistance in the Reception of a Jewish Classic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 41.

[6] Israel Shahak, Norton Mevzinsky, *İsrail'de Yahudi Fundamentalizmi* (İstanbul: Düşün Yayıncılık, 2015), 58.

[7] Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 219.

Consequently, he is regarded as a spiritual leader of religious Zionism that emerged centuries later, and his teachings have often been cited as references.[8]

The foundations of Religious Zionism were laid in the 19th century through the synthesis of secular, political Zionism with Jewish religious tradition. Political Zionists reinterpreted Jewish history from a national perspective, utilizing the Tanakh as a historical source. They aimed to present traditional Jewish rituals within a national framework while positioning Halakha as a unifying force for the Jewish community and as a basis for legitimizing their actions. In contrast, Religious Zionists reevaluated fundamental Jewish concepts, such as exile, covenant, the holy land, and the Messiah, which had remained unchanged for centuries, imparting these concepts with new meanings. By reinterpreting notions of chosenness and exile, they sought to transform Jewish passive resistance into an active struggle. Within this context, Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer (1795–1874), considered one of the pioneers of Religious Zionism, holds particular significance. Kalischer viewed the Jewish emancipation process as the beginning of a new era orchestrated by God and argued for the necessity of adapting to this new phase. Kalischer emphasized the importance of fostering relations with Gentiles, suggesting that in the past, God had used the hostility of Gentiles as a means to punish the Jewish people. He posited that redemption might similarly come indirectly through the Gentiles. Furthermore, he considered migration to Palestine and settling there as essential steps toward awaiting the time of salvation.[9]

Another prominent proto-Zionist, Rabbi Yehuda Alkalai (1798-1878), delivered written sermons emphasizing the imminence of redemption and the necessity for Jews to migrate to the Land of Israel.[10] He also advocated for Jewish organizations on international platforms to enable self-representation and defense, founding the "Association for the Settlement of the Land of Israel" with this objective. On matters such as migration to Palestine, these two Religious Zionist rabbis initially appeared aligned with political Zionists, though, for them, political organization represented a later stage. Rooted in messianic tradition, these rabbis acknowledged the inevitability of the emancipation process and underscored the importance of national unity to guard against the risk of identity loss among Jews in this transformative period.

2. The Violation of the Three Oaths

One of the most influential figures in Religious Zionism, Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (1865-1935), rather than bringing new interpretations to the Three Oaths, developed an original perspective by arguing that these oaths had been misinterpreted for centuries. Kook adapted *halakha* to align with the secular ideology of Zionism, thus introducing an innovative perspective to Orthodox Judaism. Embracing a messianic approach, Kook viewed redemption as a gradual process and interpreted the negative events of his time[11] as "links in

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8   Eric Holzer, "The Use of Military Force in the Religious Zionist Ideology of Rabbi Yitzchak Ya'akov Reines and his Successors", *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* 18 (2002), 74-94.

9   Bernard Susser, Charles S. Liebman, *Choosing Survival: Strategies for a Jewish Future* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 33.

10   See Abraham Isaac Kook, *Mashmia Shalom* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, n.d.).

11   Kook, who argued that the end of earthly life was near, associated the losses of World War I with the coming of Judgment Day. In an essay written during the war, he expressed his thoughts as follows: "The war is a planned period of purification. This purification will affect the whole world, including the holy land. The war will bring

the chain of redemption" (*athalta digeulah* in Hebrew).[12] In essence, Kook believed that the people of Israel were created to serve God and were dependent on a pure bond of love with Him. He argued that the closer one is to material wealth and prosperity, the more one's connection to the truth weakens. God kept the Jewish people distanced from worldly concerns for many years to allow them to realize their inner spiritual strength. Through exile, the Jewish people fulfilled their mission as the chosen people by spreading monotheism wherever they went.[13] However, with the rise of modernity and increasing antisemitism, Kook argued that exile would not end by God's hand; rather, the Jewish people needed both physical and spiritual revival. Detached from their sacred land and striving to maintain their identity, the Jews had become spiritually weakened and were experiencing a gradual spiritual decline. Kook described exile as a heavy burden upon the shoulders of the Jewish people and asserted that their motivation to bear this burden stemmed from their historical and spiritual ties, as well as from their sense of chosenness[14]; otherwise, a secular Jewish state would emerge.[15] According to Kook and the religious Zionist rabbis of his time, neither secular nor religious views or actions alone could be fully effective. Reaching the ultimate goal would require a synthesis of these opposing views. Zionism, which brings together both religious and secular approaches, is thus seen as a crucial milestone in the journey toward redemption.[16]

3. The Religious Significance of the 1967 War

Entering the 1948 War of Independence without fully confronting the trauma of the Holocaust pushed both conditions and emotions in Israel to the extremes. During the state's early years, crises were often addressed by political leaders invoking past tragedies to mobilize the public. According to political scientist Asher Arian, Israel during this period developed a "security religion" — a mindset shaped by nationalist and religious symbols.[17] Until 1967, Israel maintained a relatively cautious foreign policy, though a deep-seated mistrust toward non-Jews persisted within Jewish society. The 1967 Six-Day War dramatically altered Israel's territorial status and international image. By defeating the armies of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, Israel expanded its borders to control the Sinai Peninsula, Gaza, the West Bank, and the Golan Heights, stretching from the Suez Canal to the northern Golan. Within Israeli society, this victory was seen by many as a "Divine Triumph" and a national rebirth. Defense Minister Moshe Dayan even drew a parallel between the six days of the war and the six days

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the Jewish nation to prominence and enable people to understand God more fully." See Kaplan, Lawrence J. Kaplan, David Shatz, Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook and Jewish Spirituality. (New York: New York University Press, 1995)

[12] Judith Winther, "Rabbi Avraham Yizhak HaCohen Kook: Between Exile and Messianic Redemption", *Nordisk judaistik/Scandinavian Jewish Studies* 9/2 (1988), 69-81.

[13] Chanan Morrison, *Gold from the Land of Israel: A New Light on the Weekly Torah Portion from the Writings of Rabbi Abraham Isaac HaKohen Kook* (Jerusalem: Urim Publications, 2006), 88-89.

[14] George Robinson, *Essential Judaism: Updated Edition: A Complete Guide to Beliefs, Customs & Rituals* (New York: Atria Paperback, 2016), 486.

[15] Abraham Isaac H. Kook, *Orot*, trans. B. Naor (New York: Tobi Press, 2015), 122-123.

[16] Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, 86-88.

[17] Asher Arian, *Security Threatened Surveying Israeli Opinion on Peace and War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 164.

of creation in Genesis, reinforcing Israel's legitimacy.[18] At this time, many previously skeptical of Israel's existence, including segments of the Jewish population, found that questions of Israel's legitimacy largely dissipated. Following the war, aliyah to Israel surged, and Zionists, religious Jews, and secular groups alike viewed these developments positively, deepening their confidence in the state. The acquisition of sacred areas in Judea and Samaria further ignited an apocalyptic fervor within the population.[19]

In the aftermath of the war, the "enlightened occupation" initiative was launched from Jerusalem to Gaza, aimed at rendering these areas suitable for Jewish settlement through the evacuation of the local population. New Jewish residential units were subsequently established in the vacated areas. During this period, religious community leaders organized various events to garner political support; for example, Rabbi Shlomo Goren blew the shofar at the Western Wall, invoking the belief in the coming of the Messiah. Similarly, Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook, who advocated for the preservation of the West Bank, Gaza, and Sinai, became a spiritual leader for settlers, spreading the message that "yielding even the smallest part of the holy land would be a grave sin." Kook worked alongside Yacoov Nissim, the Mizrahi Chief Rabbi of the time, to disseminate this message nationally. Rabbis active in political affairs argued that Judea, Samaria, and Azra held crucial importance for the arrival of the Messiah, emphasizing that settlements in these areas should be planned with utmost care; to this end, settlements like Qiryat Arba were renamed after figures from the Tanakh. Among Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook's students, Rabbi Moshe Levinger, Rabbi Haim Drukman, and Rabbi Shlomo Aviner laid the groundwork for the establishment of the Gush Emunim (Bloc of the Faithful) movement in 1974.

4. Radical Religious Groups in Israel

The 1948 Israeli Declaration of Independence committed the state to uphold equality, freedom, and rights for all citizens regardless of religion, language, race, or gender, alongside assurances to respect the holy sites of all faith communities. However, in the following years, Israel's founding socialist and secular values gradually shifted toward a more theopolitical and ethnocentric governance approach. This transformation accelerated with the 1977 election of the right-wing Likud Party, which marked a turning point as state administration began to take on an increasingly religious and ethnonationalist focus. The rising influence of religious parties in the political arena further blurred the lines between religion and state, fostering significant tensions between secular and religious groups in society.

Initially confined to secular and Zionist groups, the fundamentalist movement gained momentum following the 1967 War, particularly with the acquisition of sacred areas like East Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria. With increased support from religious communities and leaders, this movement expanded, culminating in the formation of religious Zionist movements such as Gush Emunim. These groups advocated fiercely for retaining "sacred lands at any cost" and backed an ideal of an expansive Jewish state. Radical leaders, including Rabbi Meir Kahane and religious Zionist leaders of Gush Emunim, stoked nationalistic-

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18 Roger Louis, Avi Shlaim, *The 1967 Arab-Israeli War: Origins and Consequences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 22.

19 Ilan Pappé, *Modern Filistin Tarihi*, trans. N. Plümer (Ankara: Phoenix, 2007), 260.

messianic fervor within Israeli society, promoting settlement expansion and calls for the acquisition of additional territories.

As religious groups gained influence, the political and religious balance within the state shifted further, solidified by the Likud government's policies. Radical groups began targeting not only Arabs residing in Israel but also secular and moderate Jewish politicians, with notable incidents like the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin amid peace negotiations during the Oslo Accords. These radical ideologies have permeated educational and religious institutions, deeply impacting the youth and intensifying divisions within Israeli society. Today, these fundamentalist movements remain active, contributing to the spread of extremist and nationalist sentiments that continue to increase societal tensions in Israel.

4.1. Religious Extremism: Organizations and Leading Figures

When discussing Jewish radicalism outside of Israel, organizations such as Haganah, Irgun, Etzel, and Lehi—predominantly secular and Zionist—typically come to mind. These groups were founded by young nationalists who had emigrated from Eastern Europe, influenced by revolutionary ideals, and who viewed Judaism primarily as a racial identity, emphasizing secularism and nationalism in establishing a Jewish state. These groups saw Judaism more as a unifying force shaped by secular values rather than as a religious identity, and they garnered support from religious communities to advance a shared vision, particularly in the state-building phase. Following Israel's territorial gains in the 1967 War, messianic sentiments rose among the religious sectors, setting the stage for the emergence of fundamentalist movements, most notably the religious Zionist movement known as Gush Emunim. Gush Emunim advocated for expanding Israel's borders and preserving the "sacred lands" acquired, stressing that Jews should never relinquish these territories. During this period, some communities distributed maps that promoted the vision of a larger Jewish state, aiming to annex lands from neighboring countries such as Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan.

Following the 1973 War, radical religious communities that opposed peace initiatives gained significant social influence through movements like Gush Emunim, which mobilized a broad base in Israeli society. This era witnessed the rise of religious Zionist ideology, which transformed Israel's social fabric as these movements began to engage in political actions justified by religious tenets. Rabbi Meir Kahane's Kach movement, founded in the United States, was especially impactful, rallying youth around a radical ideology and reaching the Israeli Parliament with its influence. One of Kahane's followers, Baruch Goldstein, demonstrated the violent extremes of radicalism with the 1994 Hebron Massacre, highlighting the potential for religious extremism to manifest in violence. Similarly, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated by Yigal Amir, a radical religious university student, during the Oslo Peace Process, underscoring the political power and societal reach of radical factions in Israel. Amir's claim that religious motives justified Rabin's assassination emphasized that religious radicals posed a threat not only to Palestinians but also to secular Jewish citizens. Groups like Gush Emunim and Kach have left a profound impact on Israeli society across generations, using education and public spaces to spread fundamentalist narratives and guide new generations in a religiously radical direction. Today, these extremist and chauvinist ideologies hold a considerable place within Israeli society, posing serious threats to Israel's internal security and foreign policy. Detailed examples of actions by both

small and large radical groups can enhance understanding of how these movements have legitimized their narratives and influenced Israeli society.

4.1.1. Brit HaKanaim (Zealots Alliance)

Brit HaKanaim emerged as a radical group of religious opposition to secular values during Israel's independence process. Founded by prominent figures like Rabbi Shlomo Lorentz and Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu, the organization grew influential within orthodox communities, initiating a series of actions against the state's secular framework.[20] As part of their opposition, the group employed violent tactics such as arson and attacks on businesses operating on Shabbat and secular public events, while rejecting the secular education system imposed in new immigrant camps, thereby deepening social polarization. In the 1950s, attempts to set fires in cafes and theaters open on Shabbat, as well as property damage to non-kosher food and clothing stores, demonstrated Brit HaKanaim's direct intervention in secular public life. Additional radical responses included attacks on soccer players and arson attempts on buses operating on Saturdays.[21]

One of the group's most notorious actions was the "Bride Operation," an attempt to place smoke bombs in the Knesset. Such actions cultivated a negative public image of ultra-Orthodox Jews, prompting Orthodox communities to distance themselves even further from secular society. Consequently, David Ben Gurion's vision of blending secular and religious Jewish communities into a societal "melting pot" has not materialized, as sociological divides have only deepened between the two groups. Today, interactions between secular and religious communities in Israel remain limited, and societal divisions persist on a structural level.

4.1.2. Malchut Yisrael (Tzrifin)

Following its establishment, Malchut Yisrael became popularly known as "Tzrifin" due to the trial of its members at the Tzrifin military base. Operating in the 1950s, this underground organization was primarily composed of religious youth and orthodox members who had previously aligned with nationalist groups like Lehi and Etzel, forming a unique social network. Tzrifin's defining trait was its combination of nationalist but devout members who, using rapid communication, coordinated frequent and violent actions in a highly dynamic structure. In response to the 1952 anti-Semitic "Doctors' Plot"[22] in Moscow, the group bombed the Soviet Embassy in Tel Aviv. Rejecting Israel's 1948 borders, Tzrifin advocated for the territorial claims outlined in the Torah and focused on external matters such as anti-Semitism and Israel's relations with neighboring countries.[23]

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[20] Ami Pedahzur, Arie Perliger, Jewish Terrorism in Israel, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 33.

[21] Jerusalem Post, "Analysis: The Jewish Department's Worst Nightmare", 22 April 2007 (Accessed on November 19, 2024), https://www.jpost.com/israel/analysis-the-jewish-departmentsworst-nightmare

[22] Doctors' Plot: During Stalin's era, this term refers to the trials where a group of highly skilled and predominantly Jewish doctors was accused of conspiring to assassinate Soviet leaders. The development of the trials, proceedings, and subsequent rulings were kept in the public eye by media coverage throughout the process.

[23] Pedahzur, Perliger, *Jewish Terrorism in Israel*, 31.

4.1.3. Guş Emunim

Following the partial defeat in the 1973 War, Gush Emunim was established in 1974, emerging as one of Israel's most influential non-parliamentary movements with profound religious and political significance. Driven by messianic and nationalist ideology, the movement, led by Rabbi Moshe Levinger, pursued the expansion of Jewish settlements, embedding itself deeply within Israeli political life. The foundations of Gush Emunim are rooted in Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook's early 20th-century vision of a "Greater Israel," which sought to unify secular and religious Zionists around a shared objective.[24] Viewing land through a cosmic lens, Gush Emunim aimed to reshape Israeli territories to reflect a distinct Jewish identity, systematically expanding settlement areas. Countering government interventions on unauthorized settlements through mass protests, the movement gained formal recognition, forming a "sacred alliance" with the right-wing coalition government in 1977.[25]

Guş Emunim's secondary aim was to exclude non-Jews living within Israeli territory to create a homogeneous Jewish society. Rabbis within the movement, invoking extreme interpretations of Talmudic and Kabbalistic texts, argued that negotiations with non-Jews posed a danger to the Jewish people, condemning such dialogues as initiatives that could lead to disaster. These rabbis held firmly that Jewish identity was "unique" and "chosen," regarding any calls for "normalization" as a betrayal of the covenant.[26] Consequently, a harsh stance and individual intimidation tactics toward non-Jews became common among settlers, establishing a distinct behavioral model in the community's social vision.

4.1.4. The Jewish Underground Movement of Guş Emunim

Fueled by Guş Emunim's slogans such as, "Our rights to these lands come from the Book and God, not the state," and "The Arabs are today's Amalekites," the escalating wave of settler terrorism in the 1980s inspired the formation of a new underground organization known as "The Jewish Underground" in the West Bank. This network, structured through familial ties, carried out violent actions and maintained direct connections with Guş Emunim leaders. Following the arrest of underground members, Guş Emunim actively supported them by organizing campaigns advocating for their release and amnesty, openly demonstrating its backing.

The underground organization carried out several messianic-driven attack attempts against the Al-Aqsa Mosque on the Temple Mount between 1978 and 1982; however, these plans were frequently intercepted and thwarted by Israeli internal intelligence.[27] Another target was the Arab residents of sacred areas, with operatives attempting to harass them by carrying out minor attacks on transportation, schools, and various public institutions.[28] In 1983, the group orchestrated attacks on Hebron University, Sheikh El Rashad Mosque, and

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24 Ehud Sprinzak, "Fundamentalism, Terrorism, and Democracy: the Case of the Gush Emunim Underground", Hebrew University of Jerusalem. (Accessed on October 24, 2024), https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field_document/ACLURM018956.pdf

25 Shahak, Mevzinsky, *İsrail'de Yahudi Fundamentalizmi*, 210-211.

26 Shahak, Mevzinsky, *İsrail'de Yahudi Fundamentalizmi*, 144-145.

27 Pedahzur, Perliger, *Jewish Terrorism in Israel*, 48.

28 Selin Çağlayan, *İsrail Sözlüğü Siyonistler, Muhalifler, Tarihçiler, Eylemciler, Yerleşimciler, İsrailliler* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2004), 418.

Sheikh Ali al-Bakka Mosque in Hebron, resulting in casualties and injuries. In 1984, they attempted a coordinated bombing attack on Arab buses in East Jerusalem, but the plot was foiled by intelligence, leading to the dismantling of the organization. Prior to this arrest, the group had undertaken several similar attempts.[29]

4.1.5. Keshet

Keshet was an ultra-Orthodox group organized in opposition to secular Jews in Israel, with roots tracing back to protests in the late 1960s against autopsy practices that violated religious prohibitions.[30] By the 1970s, the group had intensified its activities, issuing threats to autopsy doctors and targeting shops selling sexual materials, notably bombing an adult store in Tel Aviv. In the 1980s, Keshet gained further visibility by bombing kiosks selling secular newspapers and magazines in conservative areas such as Bnei Brak, and by drawing public attention with graffiti containing threats on the graves of Theodor Herzl and David Ben Gurion.[31] Although its actions were relatively small-scale, Keshet contributed to the deepening rift between haredi and secular Jewish communities, thereby intensifying social polarization.

4.1.6. Sicarii

Sicarii, established in 1989 and named after an ancient Jewish group known for assassinations using daggers during the Roman period, became known for its actions and assassination attempts in Israel between 1989 and 1990.[32] This group targeted left-leaning and secular Jewish politicians, academics, and media figures who supported the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Believing that attacks against Arabs failed to draw sufficient attention, Sicarii shifted focus to peace-supporting Jews within Israel, engaging in symbolic acts of intimidation such as arson, vehicle attacks, and placing explosives near the home of a Jewish surgeon who had performed a heart transplant on an Arab patient.[33] Other actions included uprooting trees in the Yad Vashem Museum's Garden, specifically in the section honoring Gentiles who risked their lives to save Jews. These radical activities ultimately mobilized Israeli internal security forces, leading to the 1990 arrest of Sicarii members by Shin Bet and the complete dismantling of the group.

4.1.7. Bat Ayin

Bat Ayin, strategically located within the Gush Etzion borders between Jerusalem and Hebron, is a settlement housing approximately two thousand Jewish settlers, with a name that translates to "apple of the eye." Since 1989, it has been inhabited by radical and messianic

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29 Menderes Kurt, "Religious Jewish Terrorism in Israel", *Bulletin of Palestine Studies* 4 (2018), 1-26.

30 Ian S. Lustick, Rubin Barry, *Critical Essays on Israeli Society, Politics, and Culture: Books on Israel* (Albani: SUNY Press, 1991), 71.

31 Ehud Sprinzak, *Brother Against Brother: Violence and Extremism in Israeli Politics from Altalena to the Rabin Assassination* (New York: Free Press, 1999), 100-101.

32 Richard Gottheil, Samuell Krauss, "Sicarii", Jewish Encyclopedia, 2nd ed., Vol. 11 (New York: Funk & Wagnalls), 323-324.

33 The Pittsburg Press, *Radical Orthodox Group Terrorizes Secular Israelis*, 25 February 1989 (Accessed on 27.10.2024),
https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=ZfgjAAAAIBAJ&sjid=0GMEAAAAIBAJ&pg=4909,4382253&dq=keshet+bombing&hl=en

Jews, known for its proximity to Palestinian villages and for repeated attacks against Palestinians.[34] Distinct from other radical groups, the Bat Ayin terror organization, primarily comprising young members, has specifically targeted Arab children; it gained notoriety in 2001 for attempting to plant a bomb timed to detonate during recess at an Arab school in Yatta. The group escalated its tactics the following year with a similar attack in Sur Baher, East Jerusalem, concealing a bomb among food packages to target Arab schools.[35] During a series of attacks in 2002, several of the group's members were apprehended, its leaders were detained, and its operations were exposed, though many members were released shortly after, and leaders' sentences were subsequently reduced.[36]

4.1.8. Lehava

Lehava is an ultranationalist movement established in Israel in the 2000s with the stated goal of preventing Jewish assimilation.[37] Led by Bentzi Gopstein, the group has advocated for limiting interactions with non-Jews and has launched provocative campaigns against Arabs. Lehava takes a hardline stance against intermarriage, monitoring Jewish women to prevent relationships with non-Jews and disrupting mixed weddings with racist demonstrations. Additionally, it has disseminated discriminatory content against non-Jews through social media, calling for restrictions on celebrating Christian holidays and barring Arabs from specific public spaces. Lehava's leaders have used these activities to deepen societal divisions within Israel, and the movement remains active today.

4.1.9. Sikarikim

The Sikarikim, an anti-Zionist group based in the ultra-Orthodox Jewish neighborhoods of Mea She'arim in Jerusalem and Ramat Beit Shemesh, has been active since 2005. In 2011, the group held a highly publicized protest in Jerusalem, drawing local and international attention by using Holocaust symbols to criticize Israel's secularization and what they perceive as media discrimination against them.[38] Declaring themselves under a "genocidal threat," Sikarikim members wore uniforms reminiscent of those used during the Holocaust and resisted opposition with physical force. Additionally, the group gained international coverage for verbally and physically harassing students at the Orot Banot girls' school in Beit Shemesh. Sikarikim has continued its confrontational stance toward the secular community through attacks on cafes where men and women sit together, as well as on bookstores selling Zionist materials, further intensifying its tension with secular Israeli society.[39]

4.1.10. Kach

The Kach Party, established in 1994 by Rabbi Meir Kahane (1931-1990) as an ultra-religious, nationalist party, left a profound impact on Jewish radicalism through its anti-Arab, racially

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34 Michael Feige, *Settling in the Hearts Jewish Fundamentalism in the Occupied Territories* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2009), 178-179.

35 Pedahzur, Perliger, *Jewish Terrorism in Israel*, 119.

36 Pedahzur, Perliger, *Jewish Terrorism in Israel*, 121-122.

37 Lehava, *Our Story*, 2020 (Accessed on 18 October 2024), https://www.lehava-us.com/our-story/

38 *Le Monde avec Reuters* (2012, January), *Une manifestation de juifs ultra-orthodoxes choque Israël*, Le Monde (Accessed on 17 October 2024), https://www.lemonde.fr/procheorient/article/2012/01/01/une-manifestation-de-juifs-ultra-orthodoxeschoque-israel_1624659_3218.html.

39 Israel Kasnet, "Extreme or mainstream?", *The Jerusalem Post*, 16.12.2011.

charged ideology. Kahane, having previously founded the Jewish Defense League (JDL) in America, used the slogan "Never Again!" to provide anti-Semitism defense training and led attacks on Soviet cultural buildings of diplomatic significance, eventually being investigated by the FBI and subsequently compelled to immigrate to Israel. As a prominent ultra-nationalist figure of his time, Kahane promoted a pure Jewish-centered worldview and drew attention with his powerful rhetoric.[40] Elected as a Knesset member in 1984, he was ultimately barred from the Israeli parliament in 1988 due to his extreme racist rhetoric. In his writings, Kahane argued for the inherent inequality between Jews and other people, advocating for the establishment of a Jewish theocratic state and intensifying anti-Arab sentiment through explicit calls for violence. Following his assassination in 1990 prior to a lecture in the United States, Kahane continued to be commemorated through the Kahane Chai group and Elnakam organization, both founded by his followers.[41] Known for his vehement criticism of peace talks and secular Jews, Kahane argued that the land of Israel belonged solely to Jews, embodying radical Revisionist Zionism with his offensive language toward Arabs and violent teachings. Disillusioned by the lack of support in the Knesset and branding secular Jews as "Hellenizers," he founded the radical group Terror Neged Terror (Terror Against Terror) to further his cause.

4.1.11. Terror Neged Terror "TNT"

Founded in 1974 under the slogan "Jewish terror in response to Arab terror," the group TNT directed numerous violent actions toward Arab-populated areas, particularly in the West Bank. Comprised of Kahane's students from the U.S. and other countries, this paramilitary group targeted Arab vehicles, markets, mosques, and gas stations, while also sabotaging infrastructure in Arab neighborhoods to worsen the living conditions for Palestinians.[42] In 1980, Kahane was briefly detained after being caught planning a bombing attack on the Al-Aqsa Mosque.[43] Through organizations such as the JDF, Betar, Kach, and TNT, Kahane sought to instill in young minds the vision of a purely Jewish theocratic state, leaving an enduring impact evident in numerous later attacks influenced by his teachings.

4.1.12. The Temple Mount Movement

Following the 1967 War, religious Zionists intensified their focus on the Temple Mount, fostering social awareness around the potential construction of a Third Temple. In pursuit of this goal, organizations like the Temple Mount and Land of Israel Faithful, Machon Ha-Mikdash, and The Movement for the Establishment of the Temple emerged in the 1980s, aiming explicitly to dismantle the Muslim sanctuary to establish a new Jewish temple. These groups, still active today, receive substantial financial and moral support from devout Zionist Jews abroad and evangelical Christians.[44] The aspiration to rebuild the temple has been adopted by various radical religious factions, leading to multiple attempts to alter the status of the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Such actions began in 1969 when an Australian radical set fire to

[40] Selin Çağlayan, *İsrail Sözlüğü Siyonistler, Muhalifler, Tarihçiler, Eylemciler, Yerleşimciler, İsrailliler*, 415.

[41] Chaim Navon, *Genesis and Jewish Thought* (NewYork: KTAV Publishing House, 2008), 191-192.

[42] Ahmed Khalifa, "Terrorism in Israel", *Journal of Palestine Studies* 14/1 (Autumn 1984), 152-157.

[43] Menderes Kurt, "Religious Jewish Terrorism in Israel", *Bulletin of Palestine Studies* 4 (2018), 1-26.

[44] For detailed information on the topic, see Motti Inbari, *Jewish Fundamentalism and the Temple Mount: Who Will Build the Third Temple?* (New York: SUNY Press., 2009)

the al-Qiblah Mosque and continued with Meir Kahane's followers attempting bomb attacks in 1980, culminating in what is known as the Al-Aqsa Massacre in 1990. Throughout these events, numerous historic structures were damaged, and significant Palestinian casualties and injuries occurred. Many extremist groups perceived these actions on the Al-Aqsa site as steps toward laying the foundations for the Third Temple. Renewed tensions flared on September 23, 1996, with the opening of a tunnel near the Western Wall, resulting in clashes that left 51 Palestinians and 15 Israelis dead and numerous injured in what became known as the "Tunnel Uprising."[45] Tensions escalated further on September 28, 2000, when Ariel Sharon's visit to the Al-Aqsa compound sparked the Second Intifada.[46]

4.2. Religion-Inspired Individual Terrorist Actions

When examining acts of terrorism driven by religious motivations in Israel, it is evident that radical actions have been carried out not only by organizations but also by individuals. Among these individual acts, one of the most infamous cases is the 1994 Hebron Mosque Massacre, perpetrated by Baruch Goldstein, a fanatical Jew; this event exemplifies a form of anti-Arab hostility that extends into a broader context of xenophobia. A second significant incident is the 1995 assassination of Yitzhak Rabin by Yigal Amir, a momentous act known widely due to extensive global media coverage; however, what notably distinguishes this assassination is that its target was a fellow Jew.

Perpetrators of individual, faith-based acts of terror in Israel have predominantly been young people, with Palestinians and secular Israelis frequently the targets. Such incidents tend to increase in response to government policies, public events, or specific commemorative days; notably, the Jerusalem Gay Pride Parade, initiated in 2002, has become a focal point for recurring violence. For instance, in 2005, Orthodox Jew Yishai Shlisel stabbed several parade participants with the stated motive of "killing in God's name," and in 2015, upon his release, fatally attacked a young person and injured six others during the event.[47]

One of the major issues of individual violence in Israel involves settler terrorism; radical religious settlers, particularly in the West Bank, have illegally occupied areas, leading to significant conflicts. These settlers, driven largely by economic and religious reasons, have continually clashed with local Arab residents over land and water resources. Perhaps the most harrowing example of settler terrorism occurred in 2015 when a Jewish settler set fire to a Palestinian family's home near Nablus, resulting in the tragic deaths of an 18-month-old child and his family.[48] Additionally, messianic settlers have aimed to destabilize the region further by vandalizing mosques, churches, and other sacred sites, uprooting trees, and burning fields, thereby seeking to make life in the area increasingly difficult.[49]

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[45] IUVM Press, *Israeli Massacres Against The Aqsa... Scenes of Bloodbaths* (2017, September), (Accessed on 21 October 2024), https://iuvmpress.com/17133.

[46] The Guardian, *Rioting As Sharon Visits Islam Holy Site* (2020, September), (Accessed on 21 October 2024), https://www.theguardian.com/world/2000/sep/29/israel.

[47] BBC News, *Man Charged Over Jerusalem Attack* (2005, July) (Accessed on 21 October 2024), http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4653655.stm.

[48] Aljazeera, *Jewish Settler Convicted in Arson Attack That Killed Palestinians* (2020 May), (Accessed on 28 October 2024), https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/05/jewish-settler-convicted-arson-killed-palestinian-200518075142356.html.

[49] For further details, see https://www.btselem.org/topic/settler_violence.

Conclusion

Since the 1880s, the influence of various forms of Zionism on Jewish migration to Palestine has not resulted in a unified alliance among these settlers. Initially, secular and left-leaning figures held dominant positions in the leadership of Zionist diplomatic efforts and in the founding of the Israeli state, thus ensuring the predominance of secular ideologies within Israeli society. This secularization was perceived as an essential step toward building a modern, democratic state, free from the religious constraints of the past. However, as antisemitism intensified across Europe, particularly in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, religious Jewish groups began to migrate to Palestine. Despite their small numbers, these groups initially avoided significant conflict with secular Zionists due to rabbinical efforts aimed at bridging the gap between the secular and religious factions. There was an expectation among secular Zionists that religious Jews would eventually integrate into the new society and abandon their traditional lifestyles. However, this expectation was not fulfilled.

Rather than integrating, certain religious groups increasingly radicalized, seeking to align their traditional religious values with the emerging Zionist project. This shift was precipitated by key historical events, such as the Holocaust, the 1967 Six-Day War, and the Yom Kippur War, which brought religious Zionist groups into the political limelight. These events gave rise to factions that rejected the secular nature of the state and its foundations, leading them to advocate for a theocratic state and to support the expansion of Israel's borders through divine right. As a result, religious Zionist factions began to exert greater political influence, employing violent rhetoric and actions to further their agenda. This radicalization of religious groups marked a significant shift in the Zionist movement, transitioning from a largely secular initiative to one increasingly influenced by religiously motivated politics.

The growing conflict between secular and religious factions deepened social polarization within Israeli society. For some religious groups, the use of violence became justified as a legitimate tool for defending their beliefs and enforcing their vision of Israel as a Jewish state governed by religious law. This violent ideology extended beyond the secular Jewish population, with religious extremists also targeting non-Jews, particularly Palestinians. These actions not only fueled the Israeli-Palestinian conflict but also contributed to a broader societal divide that remains unresolved to this day. The opposition to secular Zionist ideology, rooted in the belief that the state's secular foundations were incompatible with Jewish religious law, spurred many religious groups to take extreme actions in the name of preserving Jewish identity.

The ideological battles between secular and religious factions have become even more pronounced since 1977, with the rise of right-wing political movements in Israel. These movements have advocated for policies that further entrench religious values in public life, exacerbating tensions between religious and secular Jews and between Jews and non-Jews. The political influence of religious Zionism has continued to grow, especially within the context of settlement expansion and policies related to the occupied territories. These divisions and the accompanying social and political conflicts continue to be central issues in Israeli society, deeply affecting the nation's identity and its relationship with the Palestinian population.

This study thus explores the historical development of fundamentalist attitudes within Zionism, concluding that Zionism itself has been one of the most transformative forces in reshaping Jewish identity. The rise of radical religious Zionism has not only reshaped Jewish identity but has also perpetuated a cycle of division, conflict, and ideological confrontation. The consequences of these divisions remain highly relevant today, as the tensions between secular and religious communities continue to define much of Israel's political and social landscape.

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