



Evidence of Zionism

IN DAILY LIFE

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Israel is the birthplace of Jewish national, cultural, and religious identity. Today, almost half of the world's Jews live in Israel. For most Jews, the State of Israel is a tangible expression of the Jewish people's age-old connection with their ancestral home. For them, Zionism—the term used to convey support for Israel's existence and survival as a Jewish and democratic state and for the basic right of Jews to national self-determination in their ancestral land—is an integral part of what it means to be Jewish.

As such, targeting Jews for marginalization and ostracization because of their connection to and support for Israel is no more acceptable than targeting any other aspect of Jewish identity. Below are just a few examples of the numerous ways Zionism is expressed in daily life for Jews—in religious, spiritual, cultural, and other ways.



Next Year in Jerusalem

For centuries, Jews have ended both the Passover seder and the Yom Kippur service with the refrain “L'Shana Haba'ah B'Yerushalayim” or “Next Year in Jerusalem.” This is a definitive expression of Zionism, declaring the Jewish people’s ancient yearning to regain sovereignty in the Land of Israel, where Jews can live in their restored capital city of Jerusalem as a free people after thousands of years of being a marginalized, powerless minority around the globe.

Holiday of Chanukah

Chanukkah means “dedication,” commemorating the Maccabean Revolt in the second century BCE and the rededication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem after its desecration by the Seleucid Greek Empire. When Jews observe this holiday, they are remembering and raising up a Jewish revolt against loss of identity, loss of religious freedom, and the colonization of their homeland.

Facing Toward Jerusalem When Praying

For thousands of years, synagogues were built with the ark containing the Torah facing toward Jerusalem so that the congregation prays toward Israel.

Jewish liturgy explicitly and frequently references Jerusalem, Zion, and the Land of Israel, often with Zion as a synonym for either Jerusalem or Israel. For instance:

In the mourner’s Kaddish, a prayer that a Jewish mourner traditionally says after losing a loved one, the prayer states, “May Your sovereignty be accepted in our own days, in our lives, and in the life of all the House of Israel.” Also, the traditional words of comfort are: “May G-d comfort you among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.”

During the weekly Torah service, when the Torah scroll is removed from the ark, worshippers proclaim, “Ki Mit Zion: For out of Zion shall go forth the Torah, and the world of the Lord from Jerusalem.”

The Amidah, the central prayer of the Jewish liturgy traditionally recited three times a day, mentions Zion and Jerusalem five times and calls for the restoration of Jerusalem, including, “And to Jerusalem your city may you return;” “May our eyes behold your return to Zion...Blessed are you, who restores his presence to Zion.”

In the traditional grace after meals, Jerusalem is mentioned 12 times and Zion 10 times. A few examples: “Have mercy Lord ... on Jerusalem, Your city, on Zion the resting place of your glory;” and “Blessed are you G-d who rebuilds Jerusalem in His mercy;” and “May the Merciful One break the yoke of exile from our neck, and may G-d lead us upright.



ZIONISM IN JEWISH TRADITIONS

Challah

Jews traditionally eat Challah bread every Shabbat. The etymology of Challah is derived from an ancient Hebrew word meaning “portion,” referencing the Sabbath practice of Jews giving a portion of their bread to the priests/KOHANIM at the Temple in Jerusalem.

Tallit/Tzitzit

Traditional Jews wear a four-cornered garment daily or when praying. Rashi, a renowned 11th century Jewish commentator, explained that this correlates to the four expressions of redemption associated with the exodus of Jews from slavery into the Land of Israel.

Breaking Glass at Jewish Weddings

This widely known ritual is a powerful symbol of Zionism. A Jewish groom steps on and shatters a glass at the end of the Jewish wedding ceremony. This is done explicitly to remember the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE. This tradition emphasizes that even in moments of joy, Jews should also remember the suffering of Jews in previous generations and the eternal hope of returning to Jerusalem.

MODERN REVIVALS OF ZIONISM

Hebrew is the language of Israel and the Jewish people. Even after spoken Hebrew gradually declined, Jews continued using it for religious and other purposes until the Zionist movement was able to revive it as a modern language beginning in the late 19th century. Today, Hebrew speakers can read both an ancient Jewish text from Israel and an essay discussing cutting-edge, high-tech developments.

Menorah

The official emblem of the State of Israel is a menorah, which means, literally, “lamp.” In the Torah, G-d gives Moses the instructions for building a menorah. Jewish tradition, as reflected in the Chanukah story and the Roman Arch of Titus, recalls a golden menorah that once stood in the Temple of Jerusalem.

Israeli Flag

The flag’s vibrant blue stripes are a repurposing of the Jewish prayer shawl’s motif.

Yom Ha’atzmaut

This modern Jewish holiday celebrates Israel’s independence from British colonial rule and the reestablishment of Israel as the Jewish homeland.

