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The ideas upon which Israel's Declaration of Independence and the Law of Return were based were responsible for creating a situation without parallel anywhere in the world. This reality reflected the uniqueness of the Zionist movement, whose particular ends distinguished it from the various other movements then struggling for liberation and national fulfillment.

The purpose of Zionism was to bring about a normalization of the Jewish people, by enabling this people to return to its historic homeland (over the objections of the local Arab population who had, during the Jews' absence, made it their home), and to renew its national Hebrew culture. Even so, Zionism also identified with the family of enlightened and liberal national movements, which did not justify all means to achieve their national ends, and did not ignore the aspirations of other, at times rival, national movements. Zionism vacillated uneasily between these two poles, attempting to maintain a sort of golden mean between the methods used in the Jewish people's national struggle and the fact that the Land of Israel, the object of Zionism's national longings, was home also to a competitor people, who bore a national bond to the same territory, whether as its distinct homeland or as part of a single, greater Arab homeland.

The Declaration of Independence, as well as the legislative groundwork which the Knesset laid in Israel's early years, was an expression of this golden mean. On the one hand was the pronounced desire to enable the Jewish people to return to its land, to deepen the ties between the state and the various institutions of the Zionist movement, and to put a Jewish countenance on the nation's symbols and holidays. On the other hand was the attempt to maintain a liberal form of government—including a debate on its defining traits—in everything which related to the political and legal rights of its non-Jewish citizens.

In this way, the state progressively realized the Zionist vision, in the exact sense of the term. The surviving Jews in Eastern and Central Europe immigrated to Israel (or to other countries, as they chose), as did the lion's share of the sizeable Jewish communities in Arab lands. With the collapse of the Communist regime in the Soviet Union and the opening of its gates, most Jews who wished to leave there have by now done so, or are in the process. While many of them have come to Israel, others have sought more prosperous homes elsewhere. Today, no significant Jewish communities remain in countries that prevent their Jewish (or other) citizens from emigrating. Today, nearly any Jew who lives in a country other than Israel does so by choice.

On the other hand, Zionism has clearly failed, and rather miserably, in its mission to create a true Zionist consciousness among Jews living in countries with a liberal form of government, at least as expressed in their personal decision to make Aliya. The Jews of the liberal West, even those who supported the struggle for the right to immigrate to the Land of Israel and establish an independent national state there, did so primarily on behalf of Jews living in non-liberal countries, whose governments and populations treated their Jewish minorities with some degree of hostility.

Moreover, the Jews in Western European liberal countries did not, for the most part, even maintain a separate collective existence. The majority assimilated. These communities' continued existence was made possible primarily by new waves of immigrants who streamed into these countries from Eastern Europe. In Great Britain, France and those Scandinavian countries whose Jewish communities were largely untouched, or only partly destroyed, in the Holocaust, one would be hard pressed today to find descendants of the Jews who won emancipation at the beginning of the nineteenth century, because nearly all of them assimilated. Those living there today who maintain their Jewish identity are first-, second- or third-generation immigrants from Eastern Europe or North Africa.

Things are different in the United States, where the European notions of national homogeneity found other forms of expression than those of the European nation-state. As a nation of immigrants, America made greater allowances for preserving secondary ethnic identities, alongside the primary American national identity. Even here, however, the sense of American identity and partnership became the principal component of the Jewish community's collective identity.

And so, the world's Jews have increasingly become divided into two main communities: Jewish Israelis, on the one hand, and the American, French and British communities, on the other, which are home to Jews with varying degrees of consciousness of their Jewish identity. The Israelis are engaged in a struggle to preserve their state, develop their Hebrew culture and form a distinct Israeli national identity. The Jewish communities in

Western countries are not partners in this struggle. They do not share the burden of preserving the physical existence of the State of Israel, they do not fight in its wars, and its military cemeteries are for them tourist sites at best. The new Hebrew culture is completely foreign to them. Nowhere in the world, other than in Israel, is Hebrew cultural activity conducted, or is Hebrew the all-encompassing, everyday language of its citizens. For the past half-century, the Hebrew language and culture have been the central factors dividing Israel from the Jews living beyond its borders.

This divide is reaffirmed, every day and every hour, by the free choice of diaspora Jews. These Jews resolve to serve their countries of residence loyally, as good citizens should, and are even willing to represent their countries in dealing with the State of Israel. Americans such as Henry Kissinger, Dennis Ross, Dov Zakheim and Martin Indyk, and Britons such as Malcolm Rifkind, do not share the Israeli national experience. Dov Zakheim may faithfully observe the commandments, but he is not an Israeli. The State of Israel belongs to us, to Hebrew-speaking Israelis, and only to us.

The last fifty years were a transitional period for Jews in their various countries, offering them an excellent opportunity to decide, and to realize their decision. The majority chose to decline the Zionist option. Undoubtedly, the divide between them and Israelis will continue to grow, as did the divide between the British who remained in Great Britain and their brethren who founded the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, or the divide between the Irish who remained in Ireland and the vast number who immigrated to the United States.

The State of Israel must come to terms with this new reality—that Israel is the state of the Israeli-Hebrew nation. No longer is there any room for a Law of Return or for special legal status granted to international Jewish organizations. Israel should no longer be perceived as the “state of the Jewish people.” Jews who choose to live in the United States or France and take part in those countries’ national experience and destiny cannot simultaneously be preferred stockholders or enjoy political rights in the State of Israel. Israel must reinforce the foundations of its liberal government and adopt a policy of

total equality with regard to the rights and obligations of all its citizens. The burden of military service must fall upon all, the educational system must be uniform and not split according to religious distinctions or linguistic criteria, and Hebrew must be the official language and the language of Israel's homogeneous educational system. Put another way, Israel must adopt the French Republic's policy during the period between the debacle of 1870 and the First World War, when by means of uniform, secular French education and universal military service, the different components of the French population were welded into a cohesive and proud French nation.

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