

Post-Zionist Movement after 1948

In order to understand the significance of post-Zionist movement, it is better to have a fundamental view of post-Zionism itself. Created by Israeli Jews and developed in 1900s, Post-Zionism is the ideology that considers Zionism a component of post-nationalism. Its adepts think that Zionism plays a significant role in globalization. The question that comes to the forth here is why and in what way the religion like Judaism can have something in common with Zionism . The answer is simple; as it was suggested by Esposito, religion does not mean spirituality or a concern about God or Gods; in fact, religion refers to the power that govern people's destiny (Esposito, Fasching, & Todd, 2002). Movement based on such ideology is called post-Zionism. In other words, post-Zionist movement after 1948 refers to the concept of Jewish nationalism with an idea of the Jewish State that deals with the development and the origin of the Jewish sovereignty.

Post-Zionist movement after 1948 was initiated to create a new Jewish society that would seek its own identity and set its political and social course in accordance with its historically defined ideological purposes. Isseroff (2007) says,

The other meaning attached to "post-Zionism" is that the Zionist movement achieved its goal in 1948, when the state was founded and we are therefore in a post-Zionist period. The notion that this can somehow support the claim that Israel ought to be dismantled is absurd. Israel is not a Lego project built by children, that was created for the sake of creating it, and that should now be dismantled. (Israel News, 2007)

It is said that post-Zionist was actually started in 1948 because in that year, the State of Israel was officially founded, and to this day not only the birth of the Jewish independence and sovereignty was celebrated, but also the other institutions of Israeli society were established (Halpern & Reinharz, 1998).

Schweid (1998) says that Zionism did not have anything to do with the salvation of the Jewish people during the Holocaust. It must be admitted, though,

that Zionism saved some remnants of the Holocaust (Schweid, 1998). The American Jews who witnessed the Holocaust were under an emergency rescue mission. There was a significant change in the life of the American Jews during the Holocaust. In fact, Zionism and Jewish migration were closely interconnected – Zionism was to solve the emigration problem, and the need to emigrate would convert Zionist dreams into a political reality. However, the actual relation between them was very tenuous at first. It was an emigration movement that indeed became a major historic force, with its dynamic thrust directed toward the new Western Hemisphere Jewries (Halpern & Reinharz, 1998).

The story behind post-Zionism reflects the weakness of early American Zionism. American Zionism gradually spread among the population and soon became as popular as in 1940s when, in partnership with Palestinian Zionists, it played a significant role establishing the Jewish state in Palestine. The Holocaust started reigning in 1942, a number of Reform rabbis, led by Louis Wolsey, founded the American Council for Judaism (ACJ). In response to the extraordinary growth of the Zionist movement and the rapid proliferation of its political activities in the United States. This was the only American Jewish organization ever created to fight Zionism and the establishment of the Jewish state in Palestine (Kolsky, 1990).

ACJ played a vital role during the Holocaust, as it rebuked Zionists for exploiting the Holocaust to generate sympathy for the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. In this way, the ACJ supported the right of Jews to immigrate to any country they wished without any restrictions, including even Palestine, yet objected to the formation of the Jewish state. During the Holocaust, the ACJ accepted all recommendations of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry (AACI) to help the Jews survive. Furthermore, AACI granted the permission to one hundred

thousand of Jews to immediately enter Palestine and transform the country into a democratic state wherein Jews and Arabs would live together as free and equal citizens.

The American Jews considered the establishment of the state after the trauma of the Holocaust as a sign of the firmness of the Jewish nation. The new state proved a haven for the Jewish refugees from the Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and elsewhere. Before 1948, American Jews, secure in their adopted homeland, demonstrated a philanthropic interest in creating a shelter for refugees in Palestine; however, after the Holocaust, it was somehow assumed that all Jews could face a rather undesirable contingency someday. Holocaust was a bitter experience for them, yet the Holocaust was the sign that there is a Jewish homeland somewhere, and that American Jews can live there as well. There was a concept manifested in American Jewish aversion as Israel-refuge for Israeli immigrants to the United States.

The issue of Holocaust survivors in Europe further inflamed the rift within the American Jewish lobby, and it started burning deep. The AJC (American Jewish Committee) worked hard to soothe the U.S. immigration laws and solve the problem with Jewish refugees, but the Zionists argued that the survivors were entitled to create a state in Palestine. Infuriated, the AJC and the council warned that the Zionists, in their zeal to establish the Jewish state, would sabotage all alternative plans to find a haven for the displaced people and even made them choose Palestine. The foundation of Israel in 1948 tackled most of these disputes peacefully, but numerous Jewish organizations that were called to develop pro-Israeli policies failed to solve the complicity. Even the National Community Relations Advisory Council (NCRAC), which was newly established (1944), offered its patronage to the

organization of the local federations to avoid potential division by focusing on domestic issues (Seliktar, 2002).

Holocaust made the world consider the life of American Jews in a different way. The American Jewish attitudes toward the Arab-Israeli conflict were enhanced by a number of highly interactive factors, the most significant of which was linked to the view of Palestine as a shelter for Jewish refugees from Europe. It was a common practice to declare that in the 1930s and 1940s American Jews were incapable of confronting the Palestinians. However, this perception of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict changed after 1948. With such conceptualization of the problem, the community found it hard to understand the overwhelming enmity of the Arab countries toward Jewish sovereignty (Seliktar, 2002). The refusal of the Arab states to recognize Israel after 1948 and their goal of destroying the "Zionist entity" came to the conclusion that Arabs were to be blamed of the war. The failure of successive international efforts launched in the 1950s to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict merely enhanced the image of the Arabs' obstinacy and turned them into menace. The image of imminent catastrophe was so embedded in the collective consciousness of the Jewish community that in the questionnaires designed to measure closeness to Israel, the respondents were routinely asked how they would feel if the Arab states were going to succeed in carrying out their threat to destroy Israel (Seliktar, 2002). Of course, there was much of the Holocaust influence on the Jewish minds in this confrontation. According to the polls taken in the 1940s and 1950s, it was evident that the majority of American Jews held the Arab governments responsible for perpetuating the conflict (Seliktar, 2002).

In the 1948 Baltimore survey, 94% of the respondents asserted that Palestine was the most important trouble spot in the world, and 62% wanted the U.S.

government to help the Jews fight for their state. In 1953 and 1955, nearly 70% of American Jews viewed the Arabs as the catalysts for the Middle East struggle. The reminiscences of the Holocaust were the reason for American Jews to reassess the entire history of their nation. Spurred by the guilt over their inability to help the victims of the European Holocaust, American Jews declared that they were going to struggle to prevent another Holocaust.

The problems brewed in the America of the 1940s, as the so-called second generation tried to loosen the bonds of immigrant experience and ghetto life.

Established after 1948, the new movement had, on the one hand, their Jewish heritage of the immigrant experience and of the ghettos in which many of these new suburbanites had grown up. On the other hand, Jews welcomed a new era where they were established as American suburbanites (Heilman, 1995).

From May 1948 until early 1949, the ACJ focused on two main issues, which were creating and implementing safeguards against Israeli and Zionist interference in the lives of American Jews. In addition, American Jews were trying to solve the question of whether the organization had to continue its actions or not. For eight months, the ACJ tried to persuade the American government to condition its recognition of Israel on a written Israeli commitment not to intervene in the affairs of American Jews, but the attempt failed. However, the ACJ committed itself to preventing Zionists from dominating American Jewish life. To accomplish that, between 1949 and 1955, ACJ developed the national public affairs, encouraged religious education, and created philanthropic programs not only to oppose Zionism but also to offer an alternative to it (Kolsky, 1990).

ACJ went on with its opposition to Zionism. In public-affairs programs, the ACJ publicly objected to Zionist calls on American Jewish youth to migrate to Israel

and to display Israeli national symbols in America. Moreover, the ACJ referred to the United States as a 'diaspora' for Jews and suggested that any Jew or group of Jews, including the representative of Israel, could speak for the entire Jewish nation (Kolsky, 1990).

Religious educational programs offered by the Council started a year after the creation of Israel. The then dean of the Reform Rabbinate and an unreconstructed anti-Zionist, took the first step and at the 1949 annual conference, two months before his death, he proposed a resolution, pledging the ACJ to contribute to the revitalization of American Judaism and to build the Judaism in the United States, which would serve as a shining example that the Jewish nation could not be exterminated. Although the efforts were made to develop a comprehensive anti-Zionist political, religious and philanthropic framework for its activities after the establishment of Israel, the American Council for Judaism did not have an appreciable effect on American Jews. American message was too rational and even did not bother about the emotional appeal of Israel, the creation of which most Jews perceived as compensation for the Holocaust. On the other hand, the ACJ was unable to shake off the negative image that was created as the propaganda war with Zionists went on. Therefore, it lost its credibility for American Jews, and, while repeating the same message year after year, the ACJ became no more than a marginal, isolated, unpopular, and largely ignored gadfly, an irritating critic of Zionism of all shades and degrees. The leaders and members of the ACJ were predominantly the Reform Jews of German descents who resented both the growing influence of Zionists within the Reform movement and their relentless efforts to politicize American Jewish life.

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