

## What is Zionism?

Adat Shalom study sheet prepared by Rabbi Sid Schwarz

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### **I. Jewish Reconstructionist Federation National Task Force on Zionism, Sept, 2004 [based on Mordecai Kaplan's classic book, *A New Zionism* (1955).]**

Obligations of the Reconstructionist Community to the Jewish People:

- To support the continued existence of the State of Israel as a democratic and Jewish state, and to promote the welfare and security of all communities of the Jewish People.
- To heighten the centrality of Israel, defining and implementing an agenda for our active engagement with its land and people that includes: facilitating opportunities for member communities to deal with Israel issues and concerns; creating Israel related educational materials, ritual and liturgy; visiting Israel; increasing the study of Hebrew among all our members; encouraging *aliyah*; and advocacy on behalf of Israel consistent with Reconstructionist values.
- To support and advocate for implementation of a just and lasting peace between Israel and her neighbors, including the Palestinian people based on mutual self-determination and the preservation of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state. This obligation carries with it the right to exert influence, using democratic means, on the United States and Israel, and to support or dissent from official policies, publicly and privately, in a manner consistent with Reconstructionist values and in keeping with the Jewish value "*makhloket le-shem shamayim*" (dispute for the sake of heaven) as proper, given our position as a member community of the Jewish People.

### **II. The Jerusalem Program of the World Zionist Congress. Official definition of "Zionism". First ratified in 1968. Modified and re-ratified in 2004.**

- Zionism, the [national liberation movement](#) of the Jewish people, brought about the establishment of the State of Israel, and views a Jewish, Zionist, democratic and secure State of Israel to be the expression of the common responsibility of the Jewish people for its continuity and future.

The foundations of Zionism are:

1. The unity of the Jewish people, its bond to its historic homeland Eretz Yisrael, and the centrality of the State of Israel and Jerusalem, its capital, in the life of the nation;
2. [Aliyah](#) to Israel from all countries and the effective integration of all immigrants into Israeli Society.
3. Strengthening Israel as a [Jewish, Zionist and democratic state](#) and shaping it as an exemplary society with a unique moral and spiritual character, marked by mutual respect for the multi-faceted Jewish people, rooted in the vision of the prophets, striving for peace and contributing to the betterment of the world.

4. Ensuring the future and the distinctiveness of the Jewish people by furthering Jewish, Hebrew and Zionist education, fostering spiritual and cultural values and teaching Hebrew as the national language;
5. Nurturing mutual Jewish responsibility, defending the rights of Jews as individuals and as a nation, representing the national Zionist interests of the Jewish people, and struggling against all manifestations of [anti-Semitism](#);

### **III. Key provision on Arab/minority rights in Israel in Israel's Declaration of Independence, May 14, 1948.**

- WE APPEAL - in the very midst of the onslaught launched against us now for months - to the Arab inhabitants of the State of Israel to preserve peace and participate in the upbuilding of the State on the basis of full and equal citizenship and due representation in all its provisional and permanent institutions.

### **IV. Gil Troy, *Why I am a Zionist*, 2002**

- I AM a Zionist because I am a Jew – and without recognizing Judaism's national component, I cannot explain its unique character. Judaism is a world religion bound to one homeland, shaping a people whose holy days revolve around the Israeli agricultural calendar, ritualize religious concepts, and relive historic events. Only in Israel can a Jew fully live in Jewish space and by Jewish time.
- I am a Zionist because I know my history – and after being exiled from their homeland more than 1900 years ago, the defenseless, wandering Jews endured repeated persecutions from both Christians and Muslims – centuries before this anti-Semitism culminated in the Holocaust.
- I am a Zionist because I live in the real world of nation-states, and I see that Zionism is no more or less “racist” than any other nationalism, be it American, Armenian, Canadian or Czech, all of which rely on some internal cohesion, some tribalism, some sense of solidarity among some historic grouping of individuals, and not others.