



Back to A Zionist Future

Alex Pomson

The contemporary crisis of confidence in Zionism is not a uniquely Jewish problem. It reflects a larger historical moment in which nation-states—and the national ideas that animate them—are under question. From Scotland to South Sudan, from Catalonia to Canada, political movements grapple with whether the nation-state can still serve as a viable vessel for collective identity, cultural vitality, and moral purpose. Zionism's troubles cannot be understood in isolation from this global context.

Paradoxically, some of Zionism's oldest ideas may be more relevant today than they have been in decades. First, the promise of the Jewish state as a refuge for those in danger. In an era of resurgent antisemitism, the moral claim that a people should have a secure home is not antiquated—it's urgent, even if over the last two years residents of the Jewish home have experienced their own terrible assaults. Second is the role of Israel as a generative source of Jewish culture, above all through Hebrew. Diaspora Hebraists have never sustained thriving cultural creativity for long; and it's naive to imagine that Yiddish will somehow take on this role. As Michael Rosenak argued a couple of decades ago, Jewish literature (Jewish culture in the broadest sense) is born both metaphorically and literally from Jewish language. Only in Israel has there been sustained Jewish culture production thanks to the everyday usage of Hebrew in cafes, concert halls and commercials. Third—and this may sound like a throwback—Zionism's early experiments in cooperative living, collective responsibility, and the fusion of moral vision with political sovereignty have potential to speak powerfully to contemporary yearnings for community and purpose in atomized societies.

Interviews our team from Rosov Consulting conducted with Jewish educators from the Diaspora who have visited Israel in the last couple of years made clear to me how outdated are those strands of Zionist thought that negated the Diaspora. The events of October 7 in Israel and their consequences around the world have fostered a sense of shared fate. Of course, there is plenty of work to be done, but there is an appetite now among many to re-engage the principle of reciprocity between homeland and diaspora in the service of nurturing a sense of shared destiny.

Calls to “reimagine Zionism” in terms of Zionism 2.0 or 3.0 risk collapsing into what Robert Bellah famously dubbed *Sheilaism*: privatized, pick-and-mix belief systems detached from any binding authority or shared discipline. Zionism’s power has always rested on its ability to command allegiance to a common project, even amid ideological diversity—as diverse as what we see today. A newly customized Zionism may inspire briefly but surely won’t endure.

The task today is not to reinvent Zionism as a consumer product for niche markets of Jewish identity (the Jewish equivalent of developing the latest iPhone model), but to recover and adapt its core commitments in ways that speak to a world skeptical of borders yet hungry for belonging. That means reasserting the legitimacy of a Jewish national home without lapsing into exclusionism; renewing Israel’s role as a cultural engine without turning inward; strengthening the mutual responsibility between Israel and the diaspora; and reaffirming that the Zionist story is part of a larger human story about survival, creativity, and moral responsibility.

In 2025, a reinterpretation of Zionism must resist the temptation to become merely an exercise in branding. It must be, as it was at its inception, a moral and political proposition that binds Jews together in the project of sustaining a society in which freedom, justice, and peace are not slogans but lived realities. In that sense, the question is not whether Zionism can be reimagined, but whether it can continue to be lived with the seriousness—and shared commitment—that its founders imagined. That’s a 21st century project for Jewish people wherever they live.

Alex Pomson is Principal and Managing Director at Rosov Consulting. Born and raised in the UK, he emigrated to Israel more than twenty years ago where he lives in Jerusalem alongside four generations of his family.