



## What is the Goal of American Zionism in a Post-October 7th World?

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If Zionism is the belief that the Jewish people have the right to self-determination in our ancient homeland, and, 77 years after its ultimate fulfillment, half of the world's Jewish population chooses to live outside of that ancient homeland turned modern miracle, it makes sense that questions have arisen about what it means to be an American Zionist in a world where, on paper, the core goal of the Zionist dream has been actualized. And given that the modern State of Israel exists, and that for the majority of American Jews, a relationship with Israel is a key part of their Jewish identities, and the reality that since the October 7 massacre, Israel has increasingly become divisive rather than unifying for many in the Jewish community, the tenor of the questions has understandably increased. In previous moments, there was a largely held shared communal sense that Israel, while not being the physical home of the majority of world Jewry, was the shared project of the modern Jewish people, and the backdrop against which the autonomous Jewish story would be written in the twenty-first century. For some, that is still the case. But increasingly, there are ruminations, even from the most ardent and committed of American Zionists: What is the goal of diaspora, and specifically American Zionism in a post-October 7 world?

In a 2018 article published proximately to Israel's 70th birthday, Gil Troy wrote, "At the time [1959] Israel was fragile and the Zionist conversation was robust. Today, Israel is robust and the Zionist conversation has turned fragile<sup>1</sup>." After years of rising antisemitism, most frequently manifesting as anti-Zionism, in an increasing number of Jewish spaces, the Zionist conversation has gone from fragile to nonexistent or hostile. Thus, in the post-October 7 world, Troy's paradigm has a new dimension. Israel is embattled, and the Zionist conversation is as well.

Zionism has become the moniker spoken in hushed tones, or shouted in the streets. After a speech that I gave in 2025 to a group of academics in which I self-identified as a proud

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1 <https://www.commentary.org/articles/gil-troy/continuing-promise-american-zionism/>

Zionist, a member of the audience came up to me, furtively. “You’re the first person I’ve heard say that they’re a proud Zionist. I am too. I just can’t say it out loud here.” And, moments later, another participant came forward to share their own reflections. “I can’t believe you said you’re a Zionist. Aren’t you ashamed? How can you call yourself that?”

Zionism in 2025 is countercultural. It is seen as incongruous for otherwise liberal, progressive people to hold firm to an ideology that is seen as a last-century holdover. And yet, in 2024, the American Jewish Committee published data showing that 85% of American Jewish adults felt that it was important for the United States to support Israel<sup>2</sup>, and a majority of those surveyed by the Jewish People Policy Institute identified as Zionist<sup>3</sup>. Zionism, which has never been a monolith, has historically encompassed many different streams, all with their respective goals overlapping with the collective commitment to the greatest modern project of the Jewish people: the creation and building of the State of Israel.

In the post-October 7 world, American Zionism is not just supporting that building, though the days and weeks after the massacre saw unprecedented levels of American Jewish philanthropic support for Israel<sup>4</sup>. Zionism is proxy for Jewish self-determination in a world that feels Jewishly vulnerable. Zionism is Jewish pride when it is becoming increasingly regular for Jews to have to qualify our own humanity in order to be heard. Zionism is continuing to write our own story as active protagonists, instead of reacting to an ever-changing world. The goal, therefore, of American Zionism? In part, the same as on October 6: to provide a canvas on which the story of the Jewish people can be written with the Jews as the protagonist. And at the same time, different: Zionism is now the belief that one day, we can be October 8 Jews. Once again, not defined by that which has happened to us, but by the world we create.

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2 <https://www.ajc.org/news/ajc-survey-shows-american-jews-are-deeply-and-increasingly-connected-to-israel>

3 <https://jppi.org.il/en/17320-2/>

4 [https://www.timesofisrael.com/donations-to-israel-since-october-7-topped-1-4-billion-government-reports/#:~:text=Donations%20to%20Israel%20since%20October%207%20topped%20\\$1.4%20billion%2C%20government%20reports,-Diaspora%20Affairs%20Ministry](https://www.timesofisrael.com/donations-to-israel-since-october-7-topped-1-4-billion-government-reports/#:~:text=Donations%20to%20Israel%20since%20October%207%20topped%20$1.4%20billion%2C%20government%20reports,-Diaspora%20Affairs%20Ministry)