

A Response to “Jewish Power,” by Paul Eisen

By Joel R Finkel

“Edward Said spent a lifetime picking his way through the Israel/Zionism/Judaism minefield and never once criticised Jews...” so writes Paul Eisen near the end of his essay, “Jewish Power.” Would that the same could be said of Eisen, who, it seems, did not learn from Said and intends in this work to correct his little oversight. Without presenting any facts, Eisen spends some fifteen pages simply asserting his argument, which amounts to something classic anti-Semites could embrace (and have¹): Jews are very clever, successful people who have taken control of major sections of the U.S. ruling class and are formulating a U.S. foreign policy that is consistent with “Jewish interests.”

Central to Eisen’s argument is his assertion that there is a Jewish essence—what he calls “Jewishness”—which can be attributed to all Jews and from which naturally emerges “Jewish interests.” The problem is that such a project can only lead in two directions: Jewish chauvinism and anti-Semitism. There are many ways to investigate Jews and the Jewish experience: historic, economic, cultural, *etc.* From none of them, however, can one divine a Jewish essence. Indeed, both Zionism and anti-Semitism are based on the proposition that there *is* such an essence. At the heart of the Zionist mythology is the claim that this Jewishness contains, and has *always* contained, a primal urge to return to Palestine. Central to anti-Semitism is the idea that this Jewishness contains a primal urge to conquer the world. Although neither is correct, Eisen adopts both and, in doing so, employs Zionist mythology to construct patently anti-Semitic conclusions.

This is a trap into which Edward Said never ventured, and for good reason. The simple fact is that there is no such Jewish essence, and he knew it. Eisen, however, takes this essence as his *starting point*; and it leads to anti-Semitic conclusions.

Paul Eisen is a commendable person², and the Deir Yassin Remembered organization, of which he is a director, is an eminently worthy and important group that keeps alive the truth about the massacre of Palestinians and the Catastrophe that was visited upon them in the creation of the Jewish State of Israel. It is not my goal to argue that Eisen is an anti-Semite. I believe that Eisen has fallen into a trap that entices many activists—particularly Jewish activists—who are enormously frustrated by their impotence to make things better. They lose political clarity and resort to mythmaking. I am responding because I believe that Eisen’s arguments are not only baseless, but dangerously wrong.

This danger is manifest in the way Eisen chooses close his essay, quoting the self-proclaimed anti-Jewish demagogue, Israel Shamir:

Palestine is not the ultimate goal of the Jews.....the world is.

Now *exactly what* does this mean? Are we really supposed to be so passive as to not even *suggest* a resemblance to *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*? Then, to reinforce this dangerous hatred of Jews and Judaism, Eisen asks this intentionally ominous question:

Will the Jews of Israel, supported by Jews outside of Israel, now obey the law, live peaceably behind their borders and enjoy the fruits of their victory, or will they want more? Who’s next?

It is important to undertake the disagreeable task of responding because Eisen’s essay, and therefore the ideology it endorses, has begun to circulate within the activist community. It would be more useful to spend time organizing real opposition to Israeli policies than being forced to answer such appallingly

¹ The virulently anti-Semitic Zundelsite (www.zundelsite.org) has posted this essay, which it describes as “brilliant.” Of course, Eisen cannot control the use of his work by these scum, but that is hardly the point. The sad fact is that it represents a “brilliant” endorsement of their own ideology of Jew-hating.

² Indeed, I spent a memorable day with him in Jerusalem in April.

bad politics. Would that one could simply ignore such stuff. However, it is important to address some fundamental errors in Eisen's thinking.

Eisen divides his essay into three sections: 1) examining the relationship between Zionism and Judaism, 2) examining the relationship between American Jews and American society, and 3) examining what he calls "Jewish Power." In spite of the fact that one must wade through pages of undocumented and unsubstantiated assertions, an overriding ideology emerges from the unity of this trinity: Jews have taken over Palestine and the United States and, unless they are stopped (or stop themselves) they will take over the planet. What this actually *means*, however, is anybody's guess, but the specter of global ethnic cleansing, modeled after Israel, is clearly implied. More dangerous than his lack of scholarship and mythmaking is that Eisen's only prescription to remedy this "Jewish Power" is to oppose Jewry in order to rid the world its evil essence.

1) The relationship between Zionism and Judaism

In the preface to this section, Eisen begins his argument:

The crime against the Palestinian people is being committed by a Jewish state with Jewish soldiers using weapons with Jewish religious symbols all over them, and with the full support and complicity of the overwhelming mass of organised Jews worldwide.

Having set the table, he immediately serves the main course:

But Zionism is now at the heart of Jewish life with religious Jews amongst the most virulent of Zionists and Neturei Karta³, despite their impeccable anti-Zionism, their beautiful words and the enthusiasm with which they are welcomed at solidarity rallies, etc., may well be just Jews in fancy dress, a million miles from the reality of Jewish life.

Eisen then manifests his first major mistake, standing the question on its head:

Has our refusal to look squarely at the very *Jewishness* of Zionism and its crimes caused us to fail to understand exactly what we are up against? [emphasis in the original]

Eisen is suggesting that "what we are up against" is a Zionism that results from "Jewishness" and, what is more, that there is something uniquely *Jewish* about Zionism's crimes. Rather than the standard arguments, which rest on a misreading of Israel Shahak's analysis of how Talmudic law has been used to enhance Jewish racism⁴, Eisen attempts to discern a "Jewish identity" that "comes from deep within Jewish history," and then relate that to "Jewishness of Zionism."

There are two things wrong with this approach. Eisen first fails to undertake a serious examination of Jewish history, and then, more importantly, fails to address the Zionization, as it were, of Judaism.⁵ In other words, Eisen is so intent on proving that Zionism is a result of a "Jewish identity," which derives from "Jewish history," that he ignores the more important question: How did it come to pass that Zionism, which was an unpopular, secular, and indeed, anti-religious movement, come to dominate

³ This is a small Jewish sect that burns Israeli flags and solidarizes with Palestinians on the religious grounds that Jews were expelled from Jerusalem and are not to return to rebuild the Temple until the messiah arrives. If I drove a car with a bumper sticker that read "End Israel's Occupation Now," they would probably cheer me, unless, of course, I was driving on the Sabbath, in which case they would just as likely stone me.

⁴ Shahak, Israel; *Jewish History, Jewish Religion : The Weight of Three Thousand Years*; Pluto Press (1994). Shahak investigates how Talmudic law historically emphasized racism towards non-Jews and helped to enforce rabbinic control of a closed society. Many people mistake his analysis of classical Judaism—and its application to the ideology of a Jewish state—as a treatise on Jewish essence.

⁵ I will use the term Zionism as a short-hand for Labor Zionism, which is a distinct—and majority—tendency within the broader Zionist movement.

mainstream Jewish theology and identity? In fact, Eisen has stood the entire relationship on its head; Zionism is not dominated by "Jewishness." If anything, the exact opposite is the case: "Jewishness," at least as Eisen understands it, has become dominated by Zionism.⁶

Norman Finkelstein, who first examined this issue in 1988, described how it was not until 1967 that the American Jewish elite, having been relieved of the question of dual-loyalty (Israel had just become a U.S. strategic ally), took a vocal pro-Israel stance.⁷ Before then, Israel was hardly on the agenda of the U.S. ruling elites or the leaders of the American Jewish communities. This is not to say that American Jews were neither interested in nor felt any affinity to Israel; many clearly did. But the Zionist ideology had not yet become a central theme in Jewish theology or identity. The shift came after Israel conquered the West Bank and East Jerusalem, proving itself to be a potential ally for the U.S. ruling class. As it then became patriotic and pro-American to be pro-Israel, American Jews quite naturally joined in.

Furthermore, in the examination of this "Jewishness of Zionism," Eisen ignores the history of Zionism, which itself *promulgated the myth of a Jewish essence*. This movement to transfer European Jewry out of Europe began in the early 1800s from an emerging strain of Christian Evangelical Protestantism.⁸ The number of Christian Fundamentalist Zionists outnumber Jews in the United States today by over 4 to 1. Their numbers *also* increased dramatically after 1967, when Israel's easy victory was viewed as the unfolding of biblical prophecy. In addition, Eisen fails to mention, let alone examine, the dialectical relationship among Zionism, British, U.S., and Soviet imperialism, Arab nationalism, and Palestinian nationalism: a complex and dynamic relationship through which these movements shaped each other.

Because Eisen avoids any serious study of Zionism, his attempt to discern the "Jewishness of Zionism" is bound to inaccurately characterize its full spectrum.⁹ His focus is necessarily narrow and shallow. Furthermore, as Eisen eschews any serious study of Jewish history, and cannot but fail to accurately characterize the non-existent "Jewishness," he is left to simply *assert* a Jewish character to Zionism. For example, Eisen first gives us the totally unremarkable statement that:

Jews are complex; Jewish identity is complex and the relationship between Judaism the religion, and a broader, often secular, Jewish identity or Jewishness is very complex indeed... Jewish identity, connecting Jews to other Jews, comes from deep within Jewish history. This is a shared history, both real and imagined, in that it is both literal and theological.

He then asserts, without any evidence of any kind, that:

Central to Jewish identity both religious and non-religious is the sense of mission centered on exile and return. How else to explain the extraordinary devotion of so many Jews, religious and secular, to the "return" to a land with which, in real terms, they have very little connection at all?

But this is a myth: in fact, it is *the Zionist myth*. The fact that Eisen cannot otherwise explain this "extraordinary devotion" does not mean that this myth has any basis in material reality. To begin with, Eisen needs to explain why this "return" to the land is a central theme *now* when, throughout the 1900 years since the Roman expulsion, it was *not* a major theme. A study of Jewish history reveals no

⁶ That this seemed inevitable created the basis for opposition to Zionism from the Jewish religious communities.

⁷ Finkelstein, Norman; "Palestine: The Truth About 1948," *Against the Current* (#15; July/August 1988) [reprinted at http://www.nimn.org/Resources/history_landing_page/000028.php?section=History%20of%20the%20Conflict]

⁸ Wagner, Don, "The Alliance Between Fundamentalist Christians and the Pro-Israel Lobby: Christian Zionism in US Middle East Policy;" *Holy Land Studies*; Vol. 2 No. 2. (March 2004)

⁹ In fact, Labor Zionism, the dominant ideology that created the Jewish state, was only one of several strains of Zionism, some of which wanted to create a Jewish *homeland* but not a Jewish *state*.

major movement to “return” to Jerusalem that was either broadly supported or accepted by the rabbinic authorities.¹⁰ So why now?

This idea of a Jewish essence is central to Zionist mythology—and the idea of “return” is central to *it*—for a very simple reason: it supports the Zionist colonial project. It *is not* because there actually *is* a Jewish essence nor because the urge to “return,” which has no historical precedents, is real.¹¹

This is Eisen’s *primary* mistake. He steps out of the real world and into the mythological world created for him by Zionism. He actually defeats himself by citing the Jewish theologian, Marc Ellis:

Marc Ellis, a religious Jew, says that when you look at those Jews who are in solidarity with Palestinians, the overwhelming majority of them are secular – but, from a religious point of view, the Covenant is with *them*. For Ellis, these secular Jews unknowingly and even unwillingly may be carrying with them the future of Jewish life.

So, is not “solidarity with Palestinians” *also* an integral aspect of “Jewishness?” Could it be that there is no such thing as “Jewishness,” and that to speak of the “Jewishness of Zionism” is an absurdity?

Claiming that “Jewish specialness” is a central component to “Jewishness,” Eisen compounds his mistake by asserting that “At the heart of this Jewish specialness is Jewish suffering and victimhood.” Again, he is wrong. While one may correctly place the idea of “Jewish suffering and victimhood” at the heart of the *Zionist mythology*, it is impossible to place it at the heart of a *Jewish essence*.

This topic of Jewish specialness has been addressed by many and there clearly is an aspect of this, particularly within the modern Ashkenazi *weltanschauung*. It is derived, in part, from the special role that European Jews played in the expropriation of surplus value from both the peasantry and aristocracy, which placed them in a dual position of privilege and vulnerability.¹² Indeed, it may be the case that European anti-Semitism grew so virulent because the medium in which it thrived contained a social memory of the Jews’ special role.

It is hardly surprising, then, that the Zionist ideology—and, following that, Jewish theology—would adopt and reinforce the idea of Jewish specialness. What *is* surprising, however, is that Eisen accepts the Zionist reduction of this specialness to suffering:

At the heart of this Jewish specialness is Jewish suffering and victimhood. Like the shared history itself, this suffering may, but need not, correspond to reality. Jews have certainly suffered but their suffering remains unexamined and unexplained. The Holocaust, now the paradigm of Jewish suffering, has long ceased to be a piece of history, and is now treated by religious and secular alike, as a piece of theology - a sacred text almost - and therefore beyond scrutiny.

¹⁰ I know of not a single major movement to “return” that accompanied even major expulsions, such as from England (1290), Italy (1491), or Spain (1492), which is when a primal urge to return, if it actually existed, would most likely appear.

¹¹ It is extremely doubtful that anything but a small minority of modern world Jewry has any urge, primal or otherwise, to “return” to Palestine!

¹² Leon, Abram; *The Jewish Question—A Marxist Interpretation*, 1946 (<http://www.marxists.de/religion/leon>). While criticisms of his concept of a people-class have advanced the scholarship on this topic, Leon was among the first to apply a class analysis to the study of Jewish history. It is also instructive to read *The Memoirs of My Jewish Great-Grandfather* (introduced by M.A. AbuKhalil) Belfast Historical and Educational Society (2002) to get a sense of how some Jews continued to play an critical role as capitalist production and distribution grew in the late 19th century and superseded production based on cottage industries.

What Eisen fails to examine is *why* this “paradigm of Jewish suffering” never really existed before 1967.¹³ Instead, he claims that:

Zionism is at the heart of this. Zionism is also complex and also comes from deep within Jewish history with the same sense of exile and return. Zionism also confirms that Jews are special in their suffering and is explicit that Jews should ‘return’ to a land given to them, and only them - by God if they are religious, or by history if they are not - because they simply are not safe anywhere else on earth.

The problem here is that almost none of this is correct, save for the rather pedestrian idea that “Zionism is also complex.” First of all, Zionism is not “at the heart” of this “paradigm of Jewish suffering;” it is the other way around. Secondly, Zionism did not come “from deep within Jewish history with [any] sense of exile and return.” This is a simply Zionist mythology. Thirdly, Zionism does not “confirm” Jewish suffering, it posits, mythologizes, and profits from it.

Zionism arose late in the period of European nationalism, when German and Italian nationalism, among others, were in formation. Its leaders wanted to create a modern nation-state in which Jews could be rescued both from their assimilation (in Western Europe) and from what they considered to be a backward, medieval, mysticism-laden religion (in Eastern Europe). Western Europe, in which Jews were highly assimilated and had attained full political rights, was seen as a trap: Jews, through the very process of their assimilation, would choose to cease being Jews. And with a bigotry not uncommon for Western European Jews, those in the Eastern European shtetls were viewed as needing to be dragged into modernity in order to save them from their own backward ideas (and language).¹⁴

The “paradigm of Jewish suffering,” was *invented* to support the rather specious Zionist argument that the more Jews assimilated, the more anti-Semitism they would encounter. Of course, the actual experience was precisely the opposite: Jewish communities suffered pogroms in exactly those regions (in Eastern Europe) where they were the *least* assimilated. And this is where the Zionists found their early support; assimilated Jews (both religious and secular) in Central and Western Europe opposed them.¹⁵

Eisen goes on to suggest that the “problem with Zionism” is that it:

... expresses Jewish identity but also empowers it. It tells Jews (and many others too) that Jews can do what Jews have always dreamed of doing. It takes the perfectly acceptable religious feelings of Jews, or if you prefer, the perfectly harmless delusions of Jews, and tries to turn them into a terrible reality. Jewish notions of specialness, chosenness and even supremacism, are fine for a small, wandering people, but, when empowered with a state, an army and F16s become a concern for us all.

Let us ignore for the moment that Eisen does not explore “Jewish identity” any further than by adopting the Zionist myth of “Jewish suffering.” Let us ignore that he makes no distinction among the

¹³ Finkelstein, Norman; *The Holocaust Industry* (Verso, 2nd Edition: 2003). The first chapter, in particular, is a scholarly study of this.

¹⁴ Let me note that Britain’s early support of political Zionism was due to their own anti-Semitism and imperialist goals, and was influenced by the British Christian Fundamentalist Zionist movement. In the early 20th century, Zionism was seen as an antidote to Russian Bolshevism, in which Jews played a vital role. The timing of the Balfour Declaration, weeks before the Revolution, suggests that it was aimed at trying to convince Russian Jews to abandon their revolutionary activities.

¹⁵ Segev, Tom; *One Palestine Complete: Jews and Arabs Under the British Mandate*; Owl Books, (2001). As detailed by Segev, it was assimilated Jews in the British Foreign Service who voiced great opposition to the Balfour Declaration and insisted on including language to protect the rights of Jews in Europe: “...it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.” [my emphasis]

various Jewish ethnicities,¹⁶ but merely reduces the broad Jewish Diaspora to “a small, wandering people.” Let us also ignore the fact that he once again fails to provide any evidence for his assertion. What *is* important is that Eisen states that Zionism allows Jews to “do what Jews have always dreamed of doing.” And what *exactly* have Jews “always dreamed” of doing? It seems that, at least according to Eisen, Jews have always dreamed of exercising their “notions of specialness, chosenness and even supremacism.”

Now it is possible that what Eisen actually means is that what Jews “have always dreamed of doing” is returning to Jerusalem. After all, as we have seen, Eisen adopts the Zionist idea that “Central to Jewish identity...is the sense of mission centered on exile and return.” But he does not state this clearly and makes no attempt to parrot the usual argument that Jews for centuries have proclaimed “Next year in Jerusalem.”¹⁷

Therefore, we are left to conclude that Eisen actually means that Jews have always dreamed of exercising their “notions of specialness, chosenness and even supremacism,” justified by the *other* central theme of “Jewishness,” *viz.*, “Jewish suffering.” It is of little wonder that the Nazis who run Zundelsite consider this essay to be “extraordinary” and “brilliant.” And it is also of little wonder that Eisen presents no evidence for this assertion, as such a task would be impossible.¹⁸

It is then easy for Eisen to declare that:

This Jewish state is built on traditions and modes of thought that have evolved amongst Jews for centuries – amongst which are the notions that Jews are special and that their suffering is special. By their own reckoning, Jews are “a nation that dwells alone” it is “us and them” and, in many cases, “us or them”... Israel is a state that manifestly believes that the rules of both law and humanity, applicable to all other states, do not apply to it.

This is not only simplistic, it is false. In fact, Israel specifically *does not* “manifestly” believe that “the rules of both law and humanity, applicable to all other states, do not apply to it.” On the contrary, Israel and its supporters are quick to claim that it is the only democracy in the Middle East, is “a light unto the nations,” and that its military is the most moral and humane in the world. The point here is not that they are delusional—states are neither moral, immoral, humane, or inhumane—but that Eisen *ignores* these claims and suggests that their beliefs are the exact opposite of what they actually state.

Rather, as Shahak explains, the Jewish state is built on ideas of ethnic/religious exclusivity that are reinforced—to an ever-increasing degree—by classical rabbinic ideas based in Talmudic law. While rabbinic power over a closed Jewish society was destroyed (from the outside) by the political freedoms that emerged during the Enlightenment, Israel, as a Jewish state, represents a retreat to racism and exclusivity. This results in a decidedly undemocratic state.

Eisen then compounds this mistake by asserting that:

...this Jewish ideology [*i.e.* Zionism] , in its zealotry and irrationality, resembles more the National Socialism which condemned millions for the attainment of a nonsensical racial and ethnic supremacy.

¹⁶ Ilan Halevi, in his *A History of the Jews: Ancient and Modern*; Zed Books (1987), identifies five major Jewish ethnic groups: Ashkenazi, Sephardic, Arab, Moroccan, and Italian. To this we should probably add the Lemba, a tribe of Black Jews who migrated out of Yemen some 2500 years ago and now live in South Africa, as well as others.

¹⁷ This argument is itself specious, as the longing to be “next year in Jerusalem” was not simply meant literally. It was, in part, an entreaty for God to send the messiah (a pre-requisite for being *allowed* to return to Jerusalem). Jerusalem, in this context, is also metaphor for a more perfect, more spiritual place, and, as such, the longing to be in Jerusalem represented a longing to be in better physical, emotional, and spiritual conditions.

¹⁸ After all, *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* was not based on any facts, but created by the Czar’s secret police.

... National Socialism, like Zionism, another blend of mysticism and power, gained credibility as a means to right wrongs done to a victimized people. National Socialism, like Zionism, also sought to maintain the racial/ethnic purity of one group and to maintain the rights of that ethnic group over others, and National Socialism, like Zionism, also proposed an almost mystical attachment of that group to a land. Also, both National Socialism and Zionism shared a common interest – to separate Jews from non-Jews, in this case to remove Jews from Europe – and actively co-operated in the attainment of this aim.

Zionism is not simply a “blend of mysticism and power” that “gained credibility as a means to right wrongs done to a victimized people” in the same sense as National Socialism, *i.e.*, German Nazism, which was called into power by a capitalist class that was not competent to ensure its own profitability in the face of a world-wide economic depression and a revolutionary workers’ movement. However, it is instructive to examine, albeit very briefly, the actual connection between national socialism and Labor Zionism.

Zeev Sternhell has identified the roots of Labor Zionism in what he terms “nationalist socialism,” which was a movement in *opposition* to the liberalism of the Enlightenment as well as to the universalism of Marx’s democratic socialism.¹⁹ Whereas international socialism sought to organize human labor to bring about its own self-liberation (and, in the process, the liberation of all of humanity), nationalist socialism sought to harness human labor to create and glorify a nation-state. Like liberalism, nationalist socialism rejected the Marxist view of human society in terms of class, adopting a view that emphasized the particularities of ethnicity, religion, and nationality. So does Eisen.

Labor Zionism was not dissimilar to other nationalist movements in Europe. It included a focus on ethnic particularity, emphasized a unified national language, and its ultimate goal, like others, was to establish Jewish autonomy. What made it unique was its intent to mobilize a disparate people to colonize and conquer a *foreign* land and its indigenous people, and its reliance on a powerful imperial power, Great Britain, to assist it. Zionism was also a response to existential burdens placed upon European Jewry by anti-Semitism and fascism. As Sternhell explains:

Thus, even if Israeli society was largely an ideological creation, one should not forget that it sprang up to an equal extent as a result of the upheavals that took place and are still taking place in Europe.²⁰

Labor Zionism was not the only current within the broader political Zionist movement. But it became the dominant tendency within both Palestine and throughout the world. As Sternhell explains, the Marxist Zionists, such as Hashomer Hatzair, the Jewish Russian Marxist Party (Po’alei Tzion – Workers of Zion), *etc.*, were doomed because of the:

...tense atmosphere of building up the country, where the main preoccupation of Jewish workers was the “conquest of labor,” in other words, the dispossession of Arab workers in order to take their place—and thus the establishment of a solid infrastructure for an autonomous Jewish existence.²¹

Having ignored an actual study of either Jewish or Zionist history, Eisen is left to adopt the destructive mythology that is embraced by both Zionists and anti-Semites: that there is an identifiable Jewish essence, which comprises characteristics that can be attributed to every Jew in the world, and in which, therefore, Israeli crimes against humanity are deeply rooted.

¹⁹ Sternhell, Zeev; *The Founding Myths of Israel*; Princeton University Press (1999); translated by David Maisel.

²⁰ *Ibid.* page 13.

²¹ *Ibid.* page 16.

2) American Jews and Jewish America

In his second section, Eisen attempts to address the relationship between American Jews and American society. This is important because, according to him, "At the heart of the conflict is the relationship between Israel and America," and *also* because he feels that Jews control America. He begins by correctly arguing that "Israel is a client state of America, serving American interests or, more particularly, the interests of its power elites...if Israel did not further the interests of those who control America, then we can be sure America would not support Israel."

Eisen is now left to argue that American Jews dominate this "power elite" by first asking:

But is this the whole story? Does Israel really serve America's interests and is their relationship wholly based on the sharing of these interests? Consider how much in terms of goodwill from other nations America *loses* by its support for Israel, and consider the power and influence of the "Jewish", "Zionist" or "pro-Israel" lobby, as when many an otherwise responsible lawmaker, faced with the prospect of an intervention in their re-election campaign from the Jewish lobby, seems happy to put his or her re-election prospects way in front of what is good for America.

In other words, because one could argue that by supporting Israel the U.S. loses "goodwill," the motivation behind this ultimately detrimental support must be accounted for in another way. Eisen suggests the solution by asking:

That support for Israel must be in the interests of those who control America is certainly true, but who controls America?

Eisen will answer that it is the Jews who control America. But before examining this, it is necessary to provide an accurate analysis of U.S. support for Israel.

As mentioned above, substantial support did not appear before 1967. It was only then that Israel's military prowess led the U.S. ruling class to appreciate Israel's potential as a strategic ally. Israel's military became a proxy for that of the U.S., and was a potent defense against Soviet expansion as well as any pan-Arab or pan-Islamic movement that would threaten U.S. interests. In addition, Israel became a conduit through which U.S. military equipment could be made available to counter-revolutionary paramilitary groups in Latin America. Over time, the military-industrial complexes of the two countries became highly integrated. Troops trained together and Israeli specialists taught at the School of the Americas.

The needs of U.S. capital are served by this relationship with Israel. These needs have everything to do with maximizing the rate of profit and nothing whatsoever with serving what Eisen calls "Jewish interests." It should be simple enough to understand that, beginning in 1967, the interests of U.S. capital coincided with the economic and expansionist needs of Israel, and that therefore the U.S. ruling class has, since then, supported Israel.²²

Indeed, the fact that Israel maintains a huge lobbying effort in Washington suggests that it understands all too well that this marriage of interests may be temporary. The needs of U.S. capital may shift, causing Israel to be viewed as more of a liability than an asset.²³ Because Israel's elites, along with American Jewish elites, know full well that they do not *control* the U.S. ruling class, massive efforts to *influence* the American public and Congress have been organized.

²² For a full discussion, see: Chomsky, Noam; *Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel, and the Palestinians*; South End Press (1999).

²³ For example, it may come to view Israel's activities to be unnecessarily destabilizing. Or its very support for Israel may become a liability as it attempts to pacify Arab and Muslim resistance to its own imperialism. At any time, the U.S. ruling class could change sides.

Steve Zunes has presented a strong case that the relationship between Israel and the U.S. has placed Jews back into a traditional and vulnerable role as intermediary operatives for the ruling class. Just as throughout European history, when Jewish communities suffered as local lords withdrew their protection and abandoned them, the U.S. ruling class could not only abandon Israel but, as typically happened, use the Jews as scapegoats. Zunes writes:

One of the more unsettling aspects of U.S. policy is how closely it corresponds with historic anti-Semitism. Throughout Europe in past centuries, the ruling class of a given country would, in return for granting limited religious and cultural autonomy, set up certain individuals in the Jewish community to become the visible agents of the oppressive social order, such as tax collectors and money lenders. When the population would threaten to rise up against the ruling class, the rulers could then blame the Jews, sending the wrath of an exploited people against convenient scape-goats, resulting in the pogroms and other notorious waves of repression which have taken place throughout the Jewish Diaspora.

The idea behind Zionism was to break this cycle through the creation of a Jewish nation-state, where Jews would no longer be dependent on the ruling class of a given country. The tragic irony is that, as a result of Israel's inability or unwillingness to make peace with its Arab neighbors, the creation of Israel has perpetuated this cycle on a global scale, with Israel being used by Western imperialist powers -- initially Great Britain and France and more recently the United States -- to maintain their interests in the Middle East. Therefore, one finds autocratic Arab governments and other Third World regimes blaming "Zionism" for their problems rather than the broader exploitative global economic system and their own elites who benefit from and help perpetuate such a system.²⁴

Eisen is simply ahead of the curve in blaming *American* Jews. In spite of what he asserts, Jews neither control the U.S. ruling class nor compose a major segment of it. Eisen states:

...if Jews have influence anywhere in America, it's not over its muscle and sinew but over its blood and its brain. It is in finance and the media that we find a great many Jews in very influential positions. Lists abound (though you have to go to some pretty unpopular websites to find them) of Jews, prominent in financial and cultural life: Jews in banks; Jews in Forbes Magazine's Richest Americans; Jews in Hollywood; Jews in TV; Jewish journalists, writers, critics, etc., etc.

This is a classic anti-Semitic argument, and, indeed the "pretty unpopular websites" that publish these "lists" are virulently anti-Semitic.²⁵

Zunes writes:

Jews in the United States are often believed to have an enormous degree of economic power. Yet among the individuals who could actually be considered among the most influential sectors of the American ruling class, Jews are not represented any more than their share of the general population.²⁶

Lenni Brenner estimates that 84 of 400 (21%) people listed by *Forbes* as the richest Americans are Jewish.²⁷ This means that 79% of them are not Jewish. This is, by any estimation, underwhelming evidence that Jews control the U.S. ruling class. Even if one contends that this 21% is ten times the percentage of Jews in the country (about 6 million, or 2%), and that, therefore, Jews are *over-represented* among the rich, there is every reason to suggest that this group shares its *fundamental*

²⁴ Zunes, Stephen; "Anti-Semitism in U.S. Middle East Policy" in *ZMagazine* (March 1995)

²⁵ If you have a strong stomach, examine JewWatch.com.

²⁶ *Op. cit.*

²⁷ Brenner, Lenni; "The Demographics of American Jews" in *Counterpunch* (October 24, 2003)
<http://www.counterpunch.org/brenner10242003.html>

interests with the *ruling class* rather than the rest of the *Jews*. To suggest otherwise is to elevate the particularities of ethnicity/religion over class. This is a common mistake and, as Sternhell explains, it is central to Zionist ideology.

This Jewish elite, which is primarily centered in the intellectual sphere²⁸, made a clear pro-Israel shift after 1967, as Finkelstein has documented. This certainly was projected into the American popular culture. But the tail does not wag the dog. The promulgation of ideas that support neither the dominant ideology nor the needs of capital is allowed only to the extent that they do not significantly challenge the needs of capital.

It is these needs—that is, the needs of U.S. capital not the needs of American Jews—that are consistent with the support of Israel. In fact, Brenner estimates that only about 10% of American Jews consider themselves to be Zionist. “Yet,” suggests Brenner, “we have an overwhelmingly gentile Congress that is emphatically more pro-Zionist than the majority of Jews.”²⁹ Imagine, if you will, how difficult it would be for the American Jewish elite to become anti-Zionist; the question of loyalty to the U.S. would be raised in an instant.

To add to his own mythmaking, Eisen refers to “Jewish interests” seven times within this section, yet he never bothers to define what this means. If he defines it as support of Israel, then he should at least point out that the *overwhelming* source of this support is not Jewish. As mentioned before, Don Wagner estimates that there are about 25 million Christian Fundamentalist Zionists in the U.S. and their ideological leaders, such as Pat Robertson, are *anti-Jewish*. In fact, the sub-section of the huge Evangelical movement that supports Israel³⁰ does so because of their unique reading of biblical prophecy, in which the return of Jews to Zion will result in the tribulation and rapture, during which their god will dispatch the Jews to hell. Their support of Israel is simply to fulfil this prophecy—and rid the world of Jews. Can *this* be considered to be a “Jewish interest”?

Wagner cautions:

Indeed, the largest bloc of pro-Israel sentiment is found within Christian fundamentalist circles, whose numbers dwarf the Jewish voting population in the US (approximately 25 million Christian fundamentalists to 4 million Jews). The pro-Israel lobby and influence, then, is Christian as well as Jewish, and that reality should always be reflected. Not only does this avoid the canard that criticism of Israel and Zionist political activity equals antisemitism, but it accurately describes the contemporary political reality.³¹

Yet, in fifteen pages, Eisen mentions Christian Evangelicals exactly once, in passing. Is this because the power of the Christian Fundamentalist Zionists tends to disprove his thesis that Jews control America? He writes:

Do not the Poles, the Ukrainians, the Gun lobby, the Christian Evangelicals also not work to further their group interests?

The difference between Jews and other groups is that they probably do it better. Jews are, by pretty well any criteria, easily the most successful ethnic group in America and, for whatever reason, have been extraordinarily successful in promoting themselves both individually and collectively. And there would probably be nothing wrong with this were it

²⁸ It is important to note the difference between the spheres of industrial production, on the one hand, and that of ideas, on the other. The needs of capital are derived from the former. The latter tends to create and reinforce the dominant culture, which necessarily supports the needs of the former.

²⁹ *Op. cit.*

³⁰ The proper term for this group, according to Wagner, is Christian Fundamentalist Zionists. One should note that many Evangelicals, such as Wagner himself, are long-time activists in the Palestinian solidarity movement.

³¹ *Op. cit.*

not for the fact that these same people who exert so much control and influence over American life also seem to refuse to be held accountable.

The fact that Jews are more successful than other *immigrant* groups may be explained by the fact that the Jewish experience was, for the most part, urban, and that immigrant Jews arrived with certain urban survival skills that other immigrants, who came from agricultural societies, lacked. Also, their skin color made them more easily accepted into white America. What upsets Eisen correctly is the *Zionist* influence, which he incorrectly views as emanating *only* from a uniform and overly-successful Jewish community. He is implying that *Jewish* interests are *Zionist* interests; this is a gross generalization that leads him to oppose Jewry rather than Zionism.

Another example of this incorrect generalization appears when Eisen states:

But there is another claim, subtler and more worrying [about "Jewish Power"]. This is that *it doesn't exist*; that Jews do not wield power, that there is no Jewish lobby; that Jews in America do not exert power and influence to advance Jewish interests, even *that there are no such things as Jewish interests!* There are no Jewish interests in the war in Iraq, there are no Jewish interests in America; most amazing, there are no Jewish interests even in Israel and Palestine. There is no Jewish collective. Jews do not act together to advance their aims.

Without a shred of evidence—or even an explanation—Eisen asserts that there are "Jewish interests in the war in Iraq." This is convenient, even required, in order to prove that Jews control America, but it is entirely unsubstantiated. Of course, one would not be particularly surprised if American Jews, who undoubtedly exhibit an affinity for Israel, would be just as susceptible—or even *more* susceptible—to the argument that Saddam Hussein represented a real threat to Israelis. After all, Hussein *did* attack them with SCUD missiles.³² Therefore, one would not be surprised if American Jews supported the war in greater numbers than others. However, *exactly the opposite* was found by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press: American Jews express *less* support for the war on Iraq than does the general population (52% to 62%).³³ This disconnect between the American Jewish community and those Jewish elites who support the war is enough to disprove Eisen's claim that there is a "Jewish collective" that "act[s] together to advance their aims."³⁴

Eisen continues:

This conflation of Jewish interests with American interests is nowhere more stark than in present American foreign policy. If ever an image was reminiscent of a Jewish world conspiracy, the spectacle of the Jewish neo-cons gathered around the current presidency and directing policy in the Middle East, this must be it. But we are told that the fact that the Jewish neo-cons, many with links with right wing political groups within Israel, are in the forefront of urging a pro-Israel policy, is but a coincidence, and any suggestion that these figures might be influenced by their Jewishness and their links with Israel is immediately marginalised as reviving old anti-Semitic myths about Jewish dual loyalty.

It is Eisen who is conflating Zionist interest with Jewish interests. Keeping in mind that Eisen has nowhere explicitly defined "Jewish interests," he speaks of the "the spectacle of the Jewish neo-cons" who are "influenced by their Jewishness" and who have "gathered around the current presidency and directing policy in the Middle East." I suppose we must count among these Bush, Chaney, Ashcroft, Rumsfeld, and Rice. Of course there are neo-conservative Jews who are *also* influential, and they have ideological loyalties to the Likud Party. But this right-wing Israeli political party no more represents "Jewish interests" than the man in the moon.

³² Ironically, many of these missiles fell on Iraqi Jews living in a suburb of Tel-Aviv.

³³ As reported on March 13, 2003 by Fox News: "Powell Scoffs at Conspiracy Theories on Iraq War" [<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,81002,00.html>]

³⁴ I am *not* arguing here that there is no pro-Israel lobby or that it does not comprise, along with others, Jews who are organized *as Jews*. I am arguing that it represents Zionist interests, not Jewish interests.

Eisen joins such brilliant thinkers as Patrick Buchanan, Rep. James Moran, (D-Va.), Gary Hart, and a whole host of right-wing anti-Semites in asserting this nonsense. Even Ari Shavit, writing in *Haaretz*, states "The war in Iraq was conceived by 25 neoconservative intellectuals, most of them Jewish, who are pushing President Bush to change the course of history."³⁵

But why this indictment of *Jews*, and the suggestion of some hidden *Jewish* agenda, rather than indicting the *neo-conservative* ideology? Neo-conservatism is not a *Jewish* ideology. We should remember that this very dangerous argument was used to declare that Bolshevism was a grand Jewish plot. Indeed, many anti-Semitic web sites *still* make this a *primary* focus.

In short, Eisen would have his readers believe that "cagey" Jews within the ruling class, absorbed by their "Jewishness" and exercising their "Jewish power," are formulating foreign policy to advance "Jewish interests." Throughout, Eisen conflates *Jewish* interests with *Zionist* interests. This is exactly what the Zionist ideologues want: everyone must agree that Zionist interests are *Jewish* interests.³⁶ Eisen does so not because he is a Zionist, of course, but because he lacks political clarity. Sadly, it leads him to oppose Jewry rather than Zionism.

Eisen continues by observing that "the Jewish narrative is now at the centre of American life, certainly that of its cultural and political elites." And what narrative is this? He cites the existence of the Holocaust memorial in Washington and asks, "How is it that a group of people who make up such a tiny percentage of the overall American population can command such respect and regard that a memorial to them is built in the symbolic heart of American national life?"

Finkelstein has examined the development of that he calls the "Holocaust Industry," of which this memorial is a part. This industry manipulates public opinion to make it more profitable to sell Jewish suffering, and it shakes down governments for reparations, which almost never go to those individuals who deserve it. This is despicable behaviour to be sure. And it is indubitably the case that these profits are directed into the Zionist project. But why indict *Jews*, as a group, rather than these *profiteers* as a group, as Finkelstein does? It is so much easier to ignore the details and advance an ideology based on ethnic/religious interests and power.

Eisen makes a further, outrageous claim: that no one is allowed to question the Holocaust narrative that has been constructed while other genocides may be "freely discussed:"

Whether those who question the Holocaust narrative are revisionist scholars striving to find the truth and shamelessly persecuted for opposing a powerful faction, or whether they are crazy Jew-haters denying a tragedy and defaming its victims, the fact is that one may question the Armenian genocide, one may freely discuss the Slave Trade, one can say that the murder of millions of Ibos, Kampuchians and Rwandans never took place and that the moon is but a piece of green cheese floating in space, but one may not question the Jewish Holocaust. Why? Because, like the rest of the Jewish history of suffering, the Holocaust underpins the narrative of Jewish innocence which is used to bewilder and befuddle any attempt to see and to comprehend Jewish power and responsibility in Israel/Palestine and elsewhere in the world.

This is nonsense. First of all, I do not know of many "scholars" who "say that the murder of millions of Ibos, Kampuchians and Rwandans never took place." Where is Eisen's evidence? The simple fact is that Jews, particularly those who experienced the horror of the Holocaust, have every right to be upset if revisionist "scholars" attempt to deny their suffering. Just as we should expect Armenians and Palestinians to be enraged when their own horrific experience is trivialized or denied, we should expect Jews to do exactly the same. Such outrage, even if it is *organized*, as it is with Jews, is hardly convincing evidence of "Jewish power."

³⁵ "White Man's Burden" by Avi Shavit; *Haaretz* (May 4, 2003).

³⁶ Therefore, to criticize Israel is anti-Jewish.

To be sure, the Jewish community exercises greater influence over the Democratic Party and U.S. foreign policy than its raw numbers would predict. It is also true that there are Jewish institutions, both secular and religious, that thrive on protecting and promulgating the Zionist mythology and ideology. It is true that prominent Jews and Jewish institutions are involved in the vilification of Islam³⁷. And it is true that many wealthy Jews have, and continue to, underwrite the Israeli colonial project.³⁸ But none of this should be used to suggest that Jews represent a monolithic community that controls, either secretly or openly, the U.S. ruling class. Acting alone, the Jewish elites who espouse Zionist mythology and who support the Zionist project would be impotent. Their power, such as it is, derives from their coalition with powerful partners in the religious right and within the U.S. ruling class, which acts on its own behalf.

3) "Jewish Power"

In this section, Eisen presents a depressingly confused—and confusing—argument that at one and the same time 1) one *cannot* "draw a distinction between Jews, Israelis and Zionists," yet 2) "It is true that 'the Jews' *do not* constitute a legally recognized body... It is also true that the Zionists *do not* represent all Jews but they do represent the views of very many Jews indeed, and certainly the most powerful and influential Jews," and, what is more, 3) "'the Jews' are not a legally constituted body and they *do not* have an obvious and defined *common policy*." [my emphasis]

But he argues that, nonetheless, there is such a thing as "Jewish Power" simply because there is such a thing as "Jewish identity" and because many American Jews support Israel to one extent or another. The flaw, it seems, is inherent in "Jewishness," that is, the Jews' "common spirit," which, he claims, is the "specialness" of Jewish suffering and victimhood. From this repetition of his early mistake, he therefore adopts the very principled position that one should oppose Jewry, not Jews!

He begins by reviewing the ideology of the anti-Semitic Israel Shamir³⁹, who, he claims, has joined other "famous escapees [from Judaism] as Karl Marx, St. Paul, Leon Trotsky,"⁴⁰ and who, he writes, "has no trouble whatsoever in calling a Jew a Jew." Eisen shares Shamir's view that Jews are fundamentally different than other people. It is therefore perfectly easy to ascribe to Jews certain characteristics and claim that "Jews are responsible and should be held accountable" for the crimes of the Israeli government. It is also easy to claim that:

For so long now Jews have told the world that black is white and not only that, but also if anyone should dare to deny that black is white they will be denounced as anti-Semites with all the attendant penalties. We are held in a moral and intellectual lock, the intention of which has been to silence all criticism of Israeli and Jewish power.

Jews, it seems, are not only intent on exercising their "Jewish Power," they lie about it, too. To add insult to injury—and it is no small insult—Eisen invokes the Jewish theologian, Marc Ellis, whose words are placed immediately before Eisen's closing paragraphs:

³⁷ Daniel Pipes, for example, who is among the most outspoken anti-Muslim bigots, has worked closely with Pat Robertson in advancing this bigotry.

³⁸ The casino magnate, Irving Moscowitz, for example, is a major donor to the Jewish colonization of East Jerusalem and the surrounding region.

³⁹ In 2001, Israel Shamir became the darling of guilt-ridden Jews. He espouses an ideology that is openly anti-Jewish; that is, he faults Jews for being Jews. Interestingly, it was two Arabs, Ali Abunimah (who started the Electronic Intifada web site) and Hussein Ibish (of the Arab-American Anti Discrimination Committee), who first spoke out against Shamir's anti-Semitism; this while many Jews were eagerly awaiting Shamir's next beautifully written, hate-filled message. Shamir responded with pure *ad hominem* attacks on these two committed activists. See <http://www.abunimah.org/features/010416shamir.html>

⁴⁰ Marx had to "escape" a youthful bout of Christianity, the religion to which *his father* had converted. Trotsky could not possibly have "escaped" from Judaism, as it never meant anything to him.

"To the Christian and to the entire non-Jewish world, Jews say this: "You will apologise for Jewish suffering again and again and again. And, when you have done apologising, you will then apologise some more. When you have apologised sufficiently we will forgive you ... provided that you let us do what we want in Palestine." [Marc Ellis]⁴¹

After which Eisen continues:

Shamir took me to task, "Eisen is too optimistic", he said, "Palestine is not the ultimate goal of the Jews.....the world is."

Well, I don't know about that, but, if as now seems likely, the conquest of Palestine is complete and the state of Israel stretches from Tel-Aviv to the Jordan River, what can we expect? Will the Jews of Israel, supported by Jews outside of Israel, now obey the law, live peaceably behind their borders and enjoy the fruits of their victory, or will they want more? Who's next?

Who is next, indeed. Perhaps the Dene Indians in the Northwest Territories of Canada?

Conclusion

"We shall," to use Eisen's own words, "speak our minds." No one has yet been able to create a definition of Jewishness for the simple reason that there is no such thing. Religious Jews come in many varieties. Secular Jews display a wide range of political views. There is no single Jewish ethnicity and, even if there were, one would *still* be unable to discern its essence. Boaz Evron presents the argument that the only thing that all Jews have in common is a religious tradition, which began only with the return from the Babylonian Exile.⁴² The most interesting definition I have heard is that Judaism is a "conversation across the generations." Yet this lacks any specifics on which one could hang an argument of any weight.

More importantly, to accept the idea that there *is* a Jewish essence is to accept the basic premise that underpins *both* Zionist mythology *and* anti-Semitic ideology.

However, we are able to identify certain trends within both the religious and secular Jewish community. As with any other people, a certain tribalism dominates, which leads, not surprisingly, to an affinity for many things, including Israel as a place where many Jews live. There is nothing inherently criminal in this tribalism; it is merely an indication that mankind has not yet established the conditions for its abolition. The Jews' affinity for Israel is no more criminal nor unnatural than Germans' affinity for Germany or Puerto Ricans' affinity with Puerto Rico. That this sense of Jewish nationality is widespread is as obvious as it is understandable. Many factors went into the creation of this nationalism, and while a sizeable proportion of world Jewry was being annihilated, a small proportion decided to act on this growing nationalism and immigrated to Palestine, particularly after 1929 when immigration to the U.S. was severely restricted.⁴³

It was only after 1967, when Israel proved its military prowess and became an important ally of U.S. capital, that there was set into motion a whole host of projects within both the American Jewish religious and secular community to actively, and *uncritically*, support Israel. Among these projects was

⁴¹ It may come as no surprise to some that I have argued this attitude with my friend, Marc Ellis. Specifically, I do not agree with his accusation of communal guilt. However, I respect his thoughtful scholarship as well as his life-long commitment to the search for justice. I therefore declare a personal revulsion at the juxtaposition of his remarks with that of Shamir's.

⁴² Evron, Boaz; *Jewish State or Israeli Nation?*; Indiana University Press (1995)

⁴³ During the first two Aliyas (1881-1914), about 70,000 Jews, mainly from Russia, immigrated to Palestine. About 35,000 left within a few years. During the same period, about 2 *million* Jews immigrated to the U.S. Immigration to the U.S. was restricted between 1929 and 1948, when the enactment of the Displaced Persons Act opened the door to more Jews.

the creation of a series of manifestly politically-motivated mythologies, including such frauds as Joan Peters' pseudo-proof that Palestine was devoid of inhabitants before the arrival of Zionists.⁴⁴

It is also true that these myths, including Peters', are still sold openly in the bookstores and from the bema of many Jewish synagogues. Of course, this mythmaking began before 1967. We should remember that the Zionist ideology, which began by embracing, rather than challenging, the anti-Semitic movement, adopted a wide range of mythologies, each of which served to reinforce its *political* project of colonizing Palestine.

This mythology was used to conquer not only Palestine, but Judaism. The religious theology, which had taught that Jews were *not* to return to Jerusalem, was not only turned on its head, but infused to a large extent with Labor Zionist ideology. Marc Ellis has said that this ideology is now the central theme of the religion for many people, and that, therefore, the Torah should be removed from the Ark and replaced by models of Apache helicopters and the Wall.⁴⁵

This is not an indictment of Judaism, or of Jews, but of the Jewish religious establishment, which has turned a blind eye to human suffering (that is, the Palestinians'), and used the religion to sanctify egregious crimes against humanity. To a large extent this is because they, too, believe the myths and are intensely afraid to look at reality: the injustices are simply overwhelming and so are rationalized away.⁴⁶

To this end, the Israeli government's policy of pursuing a permanent war—combined with the abysmal failure of the Palestinian leadership to create a democratic resistance to the Israeli Occupation—serves to instill a sense of "us versus them" among American Jews. This is hardly surprising given that this attitude *supports* the needs of the U.S. ruling class *at the moment*. Neither is it surprising that the dominant American culture has absorbed this attitude; how could it be otherwise when its dissemination is both so lucrative *and* consistent with the (current) needs of capital?

At the same time, but for different reasons, the Christian Fundamentalist Zionist movement, which promulgates its own theology/ideology, has grown tremendously and wields enormous political power. Adherents to its apocalyptic vision, which requires that Jews return to Zion in order to be slaughtered by god, are in the White House and Congress, and their leaders own numerous broadcast facilities and publishing houses.⁴⁷ If their nonsense were not consistent with the needs of capital, one can be sure that an opposing ideology would rise to dominance. This is a real problem because if the needs of the ruling class *do change*, the opposing ideology that emerges may be forthrightly anti-Semitic.

This is not to suggest that the current ideology should go unchallenged. But we should not replace it with one that "has no trouble whatsoever in calling a Jew a Jew." We need to work to oppose the interests of U.S. capital without mythologizing them as "Jewish interests." After all, the very real interests of the ruling class have nothing to do with Jews and everything to do with maximizing the rate of profit. Indeed, one could easily argue that these interests are fundamentally contrary to the actual material interests of the vast majority of Jews, both here and in Israel.

⁴⁴ Peters, Joan, *From Time Immemorial*, HarperCollins (1984)

⁴⁵ Ellis, Marc; "Walling Off the Covenant: Jewish Identity in the 21st Century;" *Daily Star* (Lebanon) (June 23, 2003).

⁴⁶ In addition, and perhaps more importantly, the precarious nature of being an untenured rabbi is a conservatizing influence, as it is with all clerics. Furthermore, it is possible that Judaism in the modern world needs must adopt a secular theme to address the real pressures placed upon the community by the myriad enticements of the secular society into which Jews are assimilating. Zionism thereby replaces Torah because it is both more relevant and more efficacious in attracting and unifying the Jewish communities.

⁴⁷ For example, Grace Digital Media, a Christian Fundamentalist Zionist operation, was chosen to produce the government's Arab language satellite TV station. [<http://www.alternet.org/story/15801>]

We need to oppose ideologies and myths without condemning an entire religious/ethnic group or, in doing so, creating our own myth of “Jewish Power” based on the stupid and dangerous idea that *Zionist* interests are *Jewish* interests. Finally, we need to abandoned the entire concept of a Jewish essence, or “Jewishness.” Until we do, our politics will inevitably fail to advance beyond either Jewish chauvinism or anti-Semitism. And we will be incapable of engaging in the truly important work that awaits the Palestinian solidarity and global justice movements.

Joel R Finkel is a member of Not In My Name (NIMN), a predominantly Jewish organization based in Chicago that organizes opposition to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem. The opinions expressed by him in this paper are not necessarily shared by every member of NIMN.