Why Many Jews Hate Zionism: The Long History of Jewish Anti-Zionism | Benjamin Moser

They are lying to you: Zionism has NOTHING to do with Judaism. It's a protestant British idea and used as much against the jews as it is used against Palestinians. Benjamin Moser joins Pascal Lottaz to discuss Anti-Zionism: A Jewish History and the diverse Jewish thinkers who opposed Zionism. Moving from rabbis and British politicians to Arab Jewish scholars and contemporary artists, Moser explores religious objections, nationalism, antisemitism, and the promise of safety. They examine settler colonialism, minority rights, Western support for Israel, and changing public opinion. Moser argues that understanding today's violence requires looking beyond individual leaders to the ideology and historical structures that shaped the Israeli state itself. Benjamin's Links: Anti-Zionism: A Jewish History: https://www.benmoser.com/anti-zionism English edition: https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/770236/anti-zionism-by-benjamin-moser/ German edition: Anti-Zionismus: https://www.ullstein.de/werke/anti-zionismus/hardcover/9783549100912 International editions: https://www.benmoser.com/international-editions Benjamin's Substack: https://benjaminmoser.substack.com Neutrality Studies Links: Neutrality Studies Substack: https://pascallottaz.substack.com Support Neutrality Studies: https://neutralitystudies.com/donate Neutrality Studies shop: https://neutralitystudies.com/shop Time Stamps 00:00 Benjamin Moser and Anti-Zionism: A Jewish History 03:42 The Jewish dissenters in the book 08:00 Judaism, Zionism, and a shared sensibility 12:44 Antisemitism, Herzl, and the "new Jew" 18:53 The rabbis' objections to violence 22:46 Safety, statehood, and minority rights 26:23 Settler colonialism and historical comparisons 39:45 Public opinion and the limits of changing leaders

#Pascal

Welcome back, everybody, to Neutrality Studies. Today, I'm joined for the first time by Benjamin Moser, an American writer and researcher who recently wrote the wonderful book *Anti-Zionism: A Jewish History*. Benjamin, welcome. Thanks so much. Well, thank you for saying yes to this, and thank you for writing this book. You are one of the latest authors who have thrown themselves into this arena of trying to disentangle Zionism from Judaism. I just want to point out that my dear friend and colleague Yakov Rabkin, who wrote *Zionism Decoded in 101 Quotes*, is also going in a similar direction. You're going in that direction, and I really want to discuss this with you and explore your approach, because you're doing it in a very specific manner in your book. Can you maybe tell us first a little bit about why you decided to write this book, and then how you approached the subject?

#Benjamin Moser

I decided to write the book, actually, after October 7th. I mean, I was working on a completely different book, and actually, I was doing pretty well with it. I was deep into it, and I was enjoying it. And then October 7th happened. And if you knew this issue, you knew exactly what was going to happen. You knew that Israel was going to lose its marbles and start murdering tens of thousands of people. I don't know that anyone thought it would become quite this bad. But if you knew anything about this question and about this region, you knew this was going to happen. And so, towards the end of 2023, the conflation of Judaism and Zionism, of Jews and Israel, started becoming extremely aggressive and was even being given the force of law.

You know, in the United States Congress, they passed this resolution saying that anti-Zionism is anti-Semitism. And this is just such obvious bullshit. If you know anything about the Palestinian movement, if you know how many Jews are involved in this, how many Jews are losing their jobs over this and being threatened over this, you know that it's just a ridiculous equation. But nonetheless, it's an equation that has a lot of plausibility for people who don't know much about the question. And it also has plausibility for Zionists who do know about this question but who are always dissimulating and always pretending not to.

So I thought, I have to do this book, even though I didn't know what this book was, because, you know, Palestine, Israel, Zionism—it's like the most written-about subject in the whole world. So you don't want to just repeat things. You want to contribute something new. And I thought that what I could contribute was telling the stories of Jewish people who opposed Zionism, and why, and from what different angles. So I wanted to do it as broadly as possible. So not just, you know, Ashkenazic, European, American people, but people from Africa, people from the Arab world, people from Latin America, from different times, from different perspectives.

Just because of my own background, I'm more familiar with left-wing objections to Zionism. But in fact, there are a lot of very interesting right-wing objections to Zionism. There are objections to Zionism from the perspective of the Third World. There are objections to Zionism from the perspective of feminism. There are objections from the perspective of religion and of atheism and of communism. I mean, it's quite amazing how diverse these people are, but they all agree that this is a disaster. And they've been saying this for a century, and nobody's listened to them.

#Pascal

Can you give us a short list of the people who appear in your book, whose stories you trace to show their objections to Zionism?

#Benjamin Moser

Well, it starts with a rabbi in eastern Poland at the end of the 19th century, Aaron Samuel Tamares, who was a guy who lived in a little village in the eastern part of Poland. It's now on the border with Belarus. It was a town of 600 people, about half Jewish, half not Jewish. And this rabbi figured out

almost immediately that this was going to lead to a disaster, not only for the Palestinians, but for the Jews themselves. And then I go from this little muddy village to a great palace in London, the heart of the British Empire. And I tell the story of two cousins: Edwin Montagu, who's the only Jew in the British cabinet at the time of the adoption of the Balfour Declaration, and his really despicable cousin, Herbert Samuel, who becomes the first governor of British Mandatory Palestine in 1919. And then, from there, I go on to tell the story.

So that's about the Balfour Declaration. Then I go to the beginning of the Mandate, when a homosexual Dutch poet named Jacob Israël de Haan comes to Palestine as a Zionist. And, to make a long story short, they murder him. And from there, I go to Cairo, to Ahmed Sadiq Saad, who is an Egyptian communist who understands exactly what's going on in Palestine and understands how it relates to Egypt and how it's going to destroy the Jewish communities of the Arab world, which, of course, it does. And then from Cairo, I go to Houston, which is where I was born. And I tell the story of a split in the largest synagogue in the American South in 1943 over the question of Zionism. And that's also to tell the story of why Reform Jews in America, who make up the largest American Jewish group, opposed Zionism.

And then from there, I go to Baghdad. I tell the story of Avi Shlaim, who is a great British academic who grows up in the Israeli state and is slowly but surely radicalized over a long period of time. He says he was "radicalized in the archives." I tell the story of the origins of the Israeli state, and also the story of what happens to the Arab Jews. So, just as Sadiq Saad warns about this, Avi Shlaim lives through it as a little boy. And then from there, I go to—I'm not sure if I'm going to get it right—Hannah Arendt, and I tell the story of Zionist involvement with Nazism, which is the ultimate third rail when you're talking about Zionism. I talk about Felicia Langer, the Israeli lawyer who becomes the first lawyer to defend the Palestinians. I tell about Helena Salem, who's a Brazilian journalist.

I tell about Ronnie Kasrils, a South African freedom fighter. Let me see. And then I end with Nan Goldin, an American artist who experiences what she calls the Holocaust, which is the genocide in Gaza. So I think I'm missing somebody, actually, but, you know, it's a pretty broad range of people. I am really trying to include as many voices as possible, also because I want people from different backgrounds. I think Jewish people feel really alone when they discover just how twisted and disgraceful a cause they've been enlisted in, almost without knowing that they were being enlisted. And that was my case. I grew up in a very soft Zionist world. And it's really disturbing to come across the long, almost unbroken list of crimes and cruelties that Zionism has brought with it.

#Pascal

Hey, just a very quick note. The best way to support this channel is by signing up for my free Substack. You can also help with a paid subscription there, or you can get some of our new merch on neutralitystudies.com. Links below. See you there. What is it that connects all of these very different cases of opposition to the Zionist project? And just for everybody who's listening, before we get deep into the weeds, the most fundamental difference between Judaism and Zionism is, of

course, that Judaism is a religion. Zionism is a political cause. It's a political movement. And that, in and of itself, is nothing bad.

There are a lot of different political movements out there that want political things. Fine. But the Zionist movement is, of course, the aspiration to create a Jewish state for Jews only, or for Jews as an absolute majority who rule over everybody else. That's the political goal. That has nothing to do with the religion of Judaism itself in the first place, but the conflation has been that one is the other, and if you don't like the political cause, then you don't like the Jews, which is exactly what a lot of these people oppose. But I think they came to that position from different starting points in their reasoning. Something unites them, or must unite them. What is that?

#Benjamin Moser

Well, I think it's a sensibility. I mean, when I wrote my book about Susan Sontag, I wrote a lot about "Notes on Camp," which is this famous essay she wrote in the early '60s. And "Notes on Camp" was originally called "Notes on Homosexuality," and she changed the title. But it's kind of about what a gay sensibility is. So you can usually tell if somebody's gay, right? You're not supposed to be able to tell if someone's gay, according to political correctness, but, you know, you can usually tell. I live in the Netherlands. When I came to this country many years ago, I thought it was really weird that the Dutch could instantly tell who was Dutch and who was Belgian, you know.

You're Swiss, right? I mean, you can tell the difference between Swiss people and French people. You can just see it. But if I said, "Describe what you're seeing between Swiss people and Germans," you know, you can see it, but it's hard to describe. I can now spot a Dutch person from, like, 2,000 meters away. If I'm in Tibet, I can tell somebody's Dutch immediately. I don't know why. You can see it. You can see Americans miles away. And I think that you can also see Jews. There's something that's kind of hard to describe. Like, I couldn't say exactly, "It's this," or "It's that," or "It's this." But there is such a thing as a Jewish sensibility.

There is such a thing as a Jewish way of thinking and talking. Of course, it doesn't apply to everybody everywhere. But you can generalize. And even though these people are very different, I think what brings them together is not only this issue, but the way they approach it, which is very distinctly Jewish. There's something in the voice. You know, I was talking the other night about Brazilian Jews. My first book was about Clarice Lispector, and I was talking about going to these people's houses in Rio or in São Paulo. They're speaking a different language, and they have completely different experiences and everything, but they're obviously Jewish.

And I couldn't describe why, but I remember when I was young thinking, "Oh, these people are obviously Jewish." And so, if I were going to try to pin it down to something in this case, I think there is a Jewish sensitivity to injustice. There's a Jewish sense of being a pariah, in the terms that Hannah Arendt uses. It's not somebody who is a pariah because they're outcast by society, necessarily. It's somebody who chooses to be an outcast of society, who doesn't want to go along

with conventional ideas, someone who consciously chooses the position of the outsider. And so I think that's what brings these people together. But again, it's quite nebulous, really.

#Pascal

Thanks for this. I must say, though, until somebody starts speaking, I have a lot of trouble actually discerning if somebody's from Germany, Switzerland, France, or even Sweden. But once they start speaking, a lot of things become much clearer. Still, I mean, there are certain traits that make things discernible. That's definitely the case. To me, right now, one of my main concerns when it comes to Jews and Zionism is actually how to help not only protect the Palestinians from the Zionists, but also protect our Jews from the Zionists.

And I think Edwin Montagu actually realized that immediately when Balfour came up with that stupid idea and said, "This is an anti-Semitic project. You just want to get rid of us, right?" So Zionism is essentially, most fundamentally, of course, a Christian idea. It's a Protestant idea that a lot of people have traced back. And that was then kind of given to and imposed on the Jews. And some Jews took it and others didn't. Can you maybe speak to that a little bit in the cases that you looked at? Which of these Jewish writers that you came across actually realized the deeply anti-Semitic component of Zionism?

#Benjamin Moser

Well, it's more like, who didn't realize it? Because it's unbelievably obvious. Zionism, if you read the early writings of Herzl and of others, is almost comically honest. I mean, they describe Jewish men as people with big noses who are crooked financial swindlers. In the case of the women, they're loud and obnoxious and have horribly unpleasant voices. They'll say things like this. They'll say, "The Jew's life is a dog's life." You know, it goes on and on. I have a lot of examples in the book of just how aggressively anti-Semitic they were, but they were also anti-Jewish in the religious sense.

They had nothing but contempt for Jewish religion and tradition. And so this is what really offended rabbis, you know, like Rabbi Tamares, whom I mentioned. It was about getting rid of the Jews. And this was something that was very obvious from the beginning. Herzl, only three years before he wrote Der Judenstaat, wrote in his diary about this fantasy he had of bringing all the Jews in the Austro-Hungarian Empire—which was millions of people—to Vienna. Everybody's going to come to Vienna. The Pope's going to come up from Rome, and he's going to convert all the Jews to Catholicism. Okay, well, this is, like, a weird idea for a lot of reasons. Obviously, like, who's going to do this?

This is like a 30-year-old journalist in Vienna. Like, the Pope is going to come because he has this idea? Like, no. But this is his idea, only three years before he writes Der Judenstaat. And he has this very consistent idea that the Jews are disordered, the Jews are wrong, the Jews are dirty. He'll often say things like this: they're hunched over their books, they're studying their old medieval BS that

nobody really cares about, they're not modern. So I think the contempt actually is part of the success, because this appeals to a lot of Jewish people, especially in the East, you know, where the Jews are. I mean, the Jews are not oppressed in Boston.

The Jews are not oppressed in France, Germany, or England. You know, they've actually been liberated in the previous decades, in the previous century. It's the French Revolution, basically. But it appeals to people who think, "We are stuck in this very conservative religion and tradition. We're discriminated against by the Christian world. And so we have to just throw everything up into the air and start over." And I think this was appealing for that reason, not despite its anti-Semitism, but kind of because of it. It seemed very modern. It seemed very fresh. "We're not just going to sit at home and study the Torah. We're going to go out and fight. We're going to be real men."

And the question of who's a real man, what masculinity is, becomes very, very important to Zionism. And it's really weird to read it in the context of these discourses that we have now about toxic masculinity, or even ideas like homophobia or misogyny. You know, it's so obviously misogynistic, homophobic, toxically masculine in all these ways. But I think it's important to understand the appeal of that to people who were oppressed and who felt like they wanted to be real men. And that's what Zionism offered to a lot of these people. But of course, from the perspective of the smarter people, in my view, this was bound to be a disaster.

#Pascal

This is a very important point that Jakob Rapkin also points out a lot, you know, that the idea of the early Zionists, especially the ones around Herzl and so on, was to create a new Jew, a muscle Jew, right? A Jew who would fight and go out and use force rather than have violence done to them. And what we see is actually the actualization of that, right? I mean, it's hard to find a more violent society today than Israel, I would say, with the insane levels of violence being spread and seven wars everywhere. They are at war with every single country around them. Of course, all of that aside, not to speak of defining the actual borders of Israel and so on, the levels of violence being used internally and externally are quite insane. So what did these writers think about this aspect of this antisemitic project, of the Zionist project, to really change the nature of what being Jewish should mean?

#Benjamin Moser

Well, being Jewish in a traditional way, first of all, is not about belonging to a nation in the political sense. It's about belonging to a religious nation, which is an entirely different thing. And secondly, this appeal to violence really scares and alarms a lot of the rabbis. So, the Jewish idea of who is a hero is quite interesting. The hero is not somebody who goes and conquers a city. This is a very vulgar, violent idea of non-Jews. The Jewish hero is somebody who has the strength not to rebel against God, but to submit to God, to study the word of God, to live according to the laws and the commandments, which is, of course, very, very hard.

I mean, if you know anything about how many prescriptions there are for religious Jews to live by, it takes up most of your time or your entire life. It organizes your life—every day of it, every hour of it—according to certain laws and commandments. So that takes real strength, to do that religiously, to do that properly. Yakov Rabkin also describes this. It's true. I love his writings on this. To reduce that to physical strength, to physical violence—everybody knew this was going to be a disaster.

And what Tamares writes, which I find really fascinating, is that, yes, these people have more weapons than we do. Yes, these people have more, you know, guns and palaces and army regiments and stuff. But where are these people now? Where are these people who've oppressed the Jews? You know, look back into ancient history. All these empires, they're gone. All the medieval rulers that oppressed us, they're gone. Nobody's heard of these people. They're gone. The Jews are still there. So even though it looks like we are being oppressed and we're being uprooted, you know, this is actually God's way of preserving us.

And to rebel against that, to rebel against the central, fundamental prohibition of our religion, which is, as in other religions, "Thou shalt not kill"—that is going to, first of all, make the Jews just like everybody else. You know, there's this one quote, I think I actually got it from Rabkin. It's from the Chafetz Chaim, who says, "Have we suffered for 18 centuries in order to become Bulgaria?" So, you know, they think, "Oh, we're just going to be another little country with, you know, a few million people with a bunch of arms." That's not the special calling of the Jews. We don't want to become Bulgaria. So that's something that was immediately alarming from a religious perspective.

But I think one of the really interesting things this book gave me was an understanding of how the religious perspective actually is quite a practical perspective, and how they understood their position as a minority—a minority that a lot of people didn't like. And so they had these rules that derived from the Bible and from the commentaries on the Bible, but they actually were very practical. And you see now that the discarding of Judaism—because the Zionists never had any use for Judaism; they didn't like Judaism as a religion—has brought the Jews to a state of complete degradation and humiliation, disaster on every front. Yeah, they should have listened to the rabbis.

#Pascal

They should have. I mean, that would have spared a lot of people's lives. But the underlying motivation of Zionism, if we believe the words, is, of course, to have a homeland for the Jews, right? And to be safe. And for all the criticism that we have, that is something that everybody should have, right? Everybody should be safe. What is it, in your view, that made the early Zionists go the route of "We need our own state" rather than "We need to work on minority rights in the places where Jews are"? Because that would have been the obvious other thing to do.

And there were a lot of projects, right, including, of course, the United States around the corner, for all of its mistakes and so on. At that time, there were a lot of options. That's why a lot of Jews did

flee from Europe to the United States when things got really, really horrible with the Nazis. Why is it, then, that this other group decided that the national project was so much more important? Sorry, just to add: I mean, it's not just the Jewish Zionists, right? It's the Christian Zionists who, of course, pushed them very much. But there were a lot of Jewish thinkers, like Herzl and so on, who went straight ahead. Can you make sense of that yourself?

#Benjamin Moser

Well, yeah, I mean, I think this idea of safety is pretty easy to understand. Adam says that they went to Palestine as though they were going to the moon, which I think is an incredibly important statement when we think about what they wanted and what they still want when they talk about safety. Of course, everybody understands the need for safety and the desire for safety. But you don't get to go to the moon. There's not a place on this planet where you can go and say, “We are going to be safe here forever. Nothing is ever going to happen to us.” The Jews don't get to say that. The Tibetans don't get to say that. The Swiss don't get to say it. The Paraguayans don't get to say it.

#Pascal

This doesn't exist. This is a fantasy.

#Benjamin Moser

It's a fantasy of exiting history and leaving the ugly world, which, of course, again, everybody understands. History is very long. Jewish history is longer than most histories. And this desire is quite childish, really. But like many childish things, it is understandable. And I think that when people decided to go to Palestine and sort of check out, what they found was anything but safety. You know, the Jews who went to the United States did very well. Now, of course, not everybody could go to the United States. And, you know, terrible things happened, especially to people who stayed in Europe.

But at the same time, it's really important to remember that for the last 80 years, the most dangerous place in the world for Jews has been Palestine. There's no other country in the world where Jews have suffered as much as they have in the Israeli state. And so everything about Zionism is a lie. Everything. It's an exploitation of people's fears. It's an exploitation of people's reading of history. It's an exploitation, most importantly, of the Palestinian people, who have suffered such unbearable crimes for this fantasy.

#Pascal

Of the Jewish thinkers you looked at who opposed Zionism, how many actually connected the Zionist project with the colonial project and saw it as a form of settler colonialism? And I mean, there were

so many colonial projects. There are still so many. I mean, the entire United States is a settler colonial project that thrived on the extermination of the local population, who to this day live in ghettos whose websites proudly report that they now have a few dozen houses hooked up to water, as an achievement in 2026. I mean, to this day, these ghettos—reservations—are pretty bleak places. And how many of the people you looked at made that connection at an early stage?

#Benjamin Moser

Well, I'm not going to excuse the treatment of Native Americans, but, I mean, it's not quite fair to characterize these as ghettos. I mean, these are people who are full citizens of the United States and have been for more than a century. Some of them live in terrible circumstances. Some of them don't, you know, just like in other countries. The difference with Israel, you know, is that this is a systematic, deliberate, quite elaborate way of not only excluding people and marginalizing them and impoverishing them, but physically destroying them, murdering them, and exiling them. The idea, though, of settler colonialism is fascinating. And it's something that really drives the Zionists bananas.

Because I grew up in a world where Zionism and Israel could be criticized. I mean, I think it's very important to say that I didn't grow up in a world where everybody thought everything Israel did was great. People were very critical, but they were critical in a specific way. So if the Palestinians don't have water in their villages, to use your example, okay, well, then they should have water. Everybody would say, "Yeah, that's unfair. They should have the same access to education that Jewish people have." Nobody would have really questioned that, I don't think. That is called, in my nomenclature, the human rights criticism of Zionism. It's like, okay, well, people don't have human rights, so let's give them some rights.

You know, this is very natural. I think if you're a liberal-minded modern person, you think, well, you know, everybody should be treated equally. The settler-colonial criticism is much more devastating, and this is why it drives Zionists insane when you talk about them as settler colonialists. Now, the fact is, you're talking about a country that was 95 to 97% non-Jewish at the beginning of Zionist colonization of Palestine. So there are some Jews there. It's a few thousand people. It's not very many people. The population is large. And this European group comes in and starts immigrating to the country, which nobody had a problem with. If you want to move to the country as an immigrant, that's fine.

Taking over the country, ethnically cleansing the population multiple times, and ultimately committing genocide against them—that's something that no country would accept. But when you say this, they have this idea about Jewish indigeneity. They'll say, "Zionism is the world's most successful decolonization." Well, the fact is that, you know, Jews are still a minority in Palestine. They are almost entirely of foreign origin. They came in on the bayonets of the British Empire and have stayed there with the help of the American Empire and the collective West. The reason that settler colonialism is threatening to Zionism as a concept is that it calls Israel's very legitimacy into question. It says that Israel is illegitimate, that this is a Jewish Rhodesia.

This is a Jewish French Algeria. This is a settler colony of people who've come into somebody else's country, wrecked the country, destroyed these people's lives, and don't really have any business being there. And that's something that you can't look at through a liberal lens. You know, you can't say, "Oh, well, we should bring them some more water," or, "We should, you know, let them have a better school in their village." This is calling into question the entire basis of life. And that's why, when you talk about settler colonialism, people lose their minds and will devote a great deal of effort to trying to discredit this. But that's the reality.

#Pascal

They get very, very angry when they're confronted with this aspect. And they always defend themselves by saying, "No, my religion is older than all of your countries, right? And we've been here for 3,000 years. We were just away for a little bit because of circumstances, and now we're back. This is our land, right? So the others, the people who've been living here, they're the occupiers, right?" That's what you alluded to with "the most successful decolonial project ever in history," right? Did you already find analysis and criticism of this among the thinkers you were looking at for your book?

#Benjamin Moser

Yeah, so, you know, you mentioned the United States, and this is a theory that really starts emerging in the '60s, I would say, where the question becomes: what does unite these societies? So the societies would be the United States, Canada—well, all of the Americas, all of Latin America—Australia, and then places like South Africa, Algeria, Rhodesia, Ireland. You know, these are the kind of classic cases. And in fact, you know, some of these societies become successful. And by successful, that means they take over their territory and establish themselves as legitimate governments, like in the United States or Canada or Australia.

Some of them fail, like in South Africa, Rhodesia, and Algeria. But what unites them, and what separates them? And this is actually very interesting. I did forget to mention in my list of people Maxime Rodinson, who is a French Jewish scholar, an absolutely brilliant person who spoke 50 languages and who becomes this early theorist. So what is it? He says, basically—and I love this description—"Israel is a people that's taking the place of another people, and the other people don't like it."

#Pascal

Hmm.

#Benjamin Moser

Which I think is so perfect, because people always want to make Zionism and Israel and Palestine so complex. But basically, that's it. The other people who are getting pushed out don't like it, just as no other people in the world would like it. So how does this manifest itself in a way that looks like—and also doesn't look like—these other cases? First of all, they always claim indigeneity. So this is very common, including in Algeria. You would think the French are not indigenous to Algeria. But in fact, they say, "Well, we're the descendants of the Romans, and the Romans ruled Algeria. And so-and-so, a consul in 33 B.C., was from Lyon." Okay, well, fine. You know, the Italians said the same thing in Libya. The Italians said, "Well, the Romans controlled Libya, and we're the Romans. So here we are. We're not invaders. We're coming back to our own country. In fact, it's the Arabs who are the invaders, because the Arabs came in the eighth century or something."

You know, you can get into the knots of this. But what it comes down to is that these are people who are invaders, white Europeans who are technologically more advanced than the people in these countries. And they're coming in and they're taking other people's countries over by force, and they're forcing the native people into utter degradation, poverty, and submission, often culminating in ethnic cleansing or even genocide. I found it really interesting to read what I saw and then to read, for example, Patrick Wolfe, who's the Australian theorist of settler colonialism, and to read about his comparative studies. So he'll look at, like, what does Brazil have in common with Australia? And what does Australia have in common with Palestine? The big difference, though, I'll say, is that Palestine is very, very late. So it's true that the United States, for example, is a settler colony, or Brazil.

But these are things that happened centuries ago, and to a certain extent, more naturally, I would say, because they didn't start off with the ideology. In the case of Massachusetts, say, they came there as religious refugees. They came to this little corner of Massachusetts. I don't think anybody in 1620 in Boston was saying, "We're going to take over California or the Philippines." That wasn't part of the ideology. It becomes that later, but it's not inherent to it. The thing about Zionism is that it's so explicit from the beginning.

So when you're writing about anti-Zionist Jews, you're writing about people who are reacting to written and spoken statements, published documents in modern newspapers, and now on television and on the internet—people who are saying things that would have been ghastly if you were saying them in 16th-century Peru, for example. But now I think our modern sensibility has been so formed by the rejection of slavery, by the rejection of all forms of discrimination, whether it's against different ethnic minorities, religious minorities, or women. You know, I think part of our modern sensibility is that we're anti-racist, basically—or we thought we were. To see this unfolding now is incredibly shocking because... What was the First World War about?

You know, it's basically about this, right? It's about how we are against this. That's what Woodrow Wilson says he's against. That's what even the British Empire, which had taken over so much of the world, said they were against. We come out of decolonization, and right at this moment when we're

emerging from decolonization, Israel becomes independent, only a year after the independence of India. And it becomes independent as this brutal settler colony that commits this ghastly ethnic cleansing in the same year. I think the reason it's so notable and shocking is that it's seemingly going against the trends of history and of morality.

And to this day, I think the reason it resonates so much is—you know, often people like me get this accusation, like, "Why aren't you talking about Sudan? You know, why aren't you talking about Burma or something—Myanmar?" And I think the reason is not only that I'm Jewish and this is happening in the name of the Jews, or that I'm American and this is being paid for by the Americans, but also because those other cases are, you know, in some ways fights between different groups from that region. So, as terrible as they are, they're not foreign impositions on an existing indigenous population. So I think that just feels intuitively more upsetting, if I can put it that way.

#Pascal

No, you can. And another point you made is that this wouldn't happen if it weren't for the cooperation and collaboration of our countries, of our governments. You don't need to advocate for the expulsion of the Jews from Palestine. You really don't. You just have to advocate for no more weapons to go over there. No more weapons. That's all. You don't even need to cut off the economic lifeline. Just no more weapons. And that would dramatically change the way this violence can be carried out. So this is our concern, yours and mine, although I'm not Jewish.

Of course. Which shouldn't mean that we shouldn't care about these other places either. But this is being done with very much the explicit and implicit support, of course, of the Europeans and the North Americans, a good portion of whom are, again, Europeans who emigrated. So do you think that this kind of awareness is now sinking in because we are now three years into this large-scale genocide that is occurring? How are you perceiving the current changes in the public debate?

#Benjamin Moser

Well, I think that the people I write about in my book have been saying this for so long. And, you know, Rodinson—there's this image in the book of him feeling quite despairing at the end of his life, just thinking, "You know what? I've spent my whole life talking about this, and nobody's listening to me." A lot of these people—Felicia Langer, you know, who leaves Israel and goes to Germany in the '90s, dies in 2018 still believing that Palestine will be free, but really feeling like she herself has been ignored. Palestine is less free than ever. I think now it's easy for us to think about, too.

But we've seen these shifts in every country in the world, really every country, from Brazil to Japan to Denmark to Canada. Every country in the world, at the level of public opinion, sees how horrifying Israel is, and how cruel and how monstrous it is. But does that connect to a bigger theory, if you can put it that way? Does it connect to something where you can say, "This is a bad idea, and here's why it was always a bad idea. And here's why people in the 19th century said it was going to lead to

genocide, it was going to lead to this kind of destruction”? Do they have a critique that goes beyond “What's happening now is bad”?

And so I'll give you an interesting example that I have been kind of combating here in the Netherlands, which is that there are these elections coming up in Israel in a couple of weeks, or next week. So a lot of the news coverage is of Israel as a country with elections, right? Because they have elections. Sure. Only democracy in the Middle East. Yeah. Exactly, exactly, exactly. So they're saying, “Oh, well, what about this candidate, or what about that candidate?” As if this is a normal country that's having a normal election. So, like in my country, the United States, with all its corruption and hideous politics, which certainly no American would deny, these are real elections.

You know, there is a choice, even if it's often a very bad choice, as it was last time between Trump and Biden. But in Israel, there's no choice at all because, first of all, more than half the population can't vote. If you include the refugees in the nearby countries—Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Egypt—you know, plus all the millions of Palestinian refugees all over the world, you're talking about a pretty significant but still small minority of the population that's even allowed to vote. If you look at their platforms, you know, you see that each one is about how they're going to be even worse to the Palestinians than the other guy. You probably can't find a country in the world that has a less democratic system than Israel.

I mean, I would argue that, you know, even China, for example, and a lot of these countries, on a practical level, are more democratic. South Africa had elections under apartheid. It's just that only white people could vote, and white people were only 10% of the population. So is that democratic? So my fear is always that people are focusing on Netanyahu. People will say, “Netanyahu's terrible. I can't stand him. They've got to get rid of him. They've got to get rid of this bad guy or that bad guy, this minister I don't like who said something horrible and racist.” But I think what my book is trying to show is that the entire system is inherently racist.

It's not just a coincidence because one bad party gets into power. This happens in lots of countries. You know, it certainly has happened here in the Netherlands. It's happened in the UK. It's happened all over the US. But it's not the same thing as trying to understand Zionism, which is the ideology that inevitably leads to this. And that's what the people in my book have been saying for a hundred years: that it's not a coincidence. It's not one bad election. It's the fact that it's inherently undemocratic. It's inherently racist. It's inherently expansionist, which is another part of settler colonial theory, which is that these societies can't actually draw a border.

They can't actually just say, “Okay, we're done now. This is it.” You see, the United States is a great example of that. It's an inherently warlike society. If you read settler colonial theory, you understand how that happens. It's quite interesting, actually. It's the kind of thing that sheds a lot of light on how American politics works to this day, going back to the depths of our history. But I think it's

really important to say that Israel and Zionism are not a consequence; they're a cause. And so it's very important not just to be upset about something that's happening now. It's important to be upset about the whole thing from the very beginning.

#Pascal

Very well said and very well explained. It's not an outcome. It's a cause. And Zionism, the ideology of Zionism, is what ultimately causes all of this violence against the Palestinians and against the Jews. That's why anyone who wants to protect the Jews needs to protect everybody from Zionism. In any case, Benjamin, your book is called "Anti-Zionism and Jewish History." Where should people go to get it?

#Benjamin Moser

Just get it anywhere you get books. I mean, I guess most people get them online today. I don't know where people are, but yeah, it's coming out in a bunch of languages. Not Japanese, actually—not yet. I hope that I'll manage to find a Japanese publisher, but in most European languages, it's either available now or it will be soon.

#Pascal

I will certainly put the links to your book in the description box below. I hope I can find all the languages it's available in so people can click on the links. And if you're listening to this in translation, in German or French and so on, then do check it out. I highly recommend it, along with the books by Yakov Rabkin. You also mentioned Avi Shlaim. There are a lot of very good and important intellectuals, and I'm very grateful that you're putting your voice out there as well. Benjamin Moser, thank you so much for your time today.

#Benjamin Moser

Thank you so much.