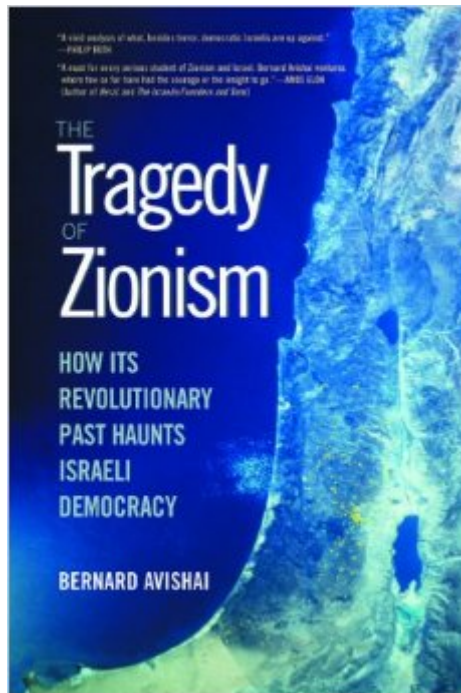


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# The Tragedy Of Zionism: How Its Revolutionary Past Haunts Israeli Democracy



## Synopsis

This original and acclaimed book explores how the impetus to settle in the "Whole" Land of Israel after 1967 derived from unexamined Zionist commitments which, though perhaps defensible in the 1930s, have become increasingly dangerous for Israeli democracy since the 1980s. It is also a chronicle of the unexpected, tragic ways the heroic Zionist theories and institutions have come to threaten Israeli democracy and to burden relations with Palestinians since the Six Day War. The subject of intense controversy when it was first published in 1985, *The Tragedy of Zionism* provides illuminating insight into the history behind the headlines. Now revised, this poignant chronicle addresses timely and compelling questions: could Israel be a democratic state if, in the name of being a Jewish state, it discriminated against non-Jews, including a fifth of its citizens who are of Palestinian Arab origin? Could it be a Jewish state without granting a privileged position to Jewish orthodoxy? *The Tragedy of Zionism* calls for democracy as an end in itself, not as a political luxury, but as an indispensable means to settle disputes nonviolently.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The future of Israel will depend to a large extent on how Israelis deal with the tensions and contradictions between the revolutionary ideals and traditions of Zionism and the aspiration to build a democratic and just society, author Bernard Avishai argues in his book, "The Tragedy of Zionism." Avishai defends the achievements of Labor Zionism and rightly insists that in the context of the period in which Labor Zionism emerged and flourished, it was both necessary, justified and successful, with its greatest triumph evident in the establishment of the state of Israel in May 1948.

Following the emergence of Zionism in the late 19th century, Avishai traces its evolution, growth, and transformation from a political and ideological movement into the foundation of a state, and from fragile early statehood into local military power. Avishai offers what has been described as a "post-Zionist" perspective on Israeli society and politics, and fears that the institutions and values of traditional Labor Zionism have become anachronistic and in some ways an obstacle to effective and democratic solutions to the problems facing Israel today. At the same time, he is critical of the "New Zionism" which is championed by Ariel Sharon and his Likudnik supporters, but notes the extent to which the rise of this movement has its roots not only in Vladimir Jabotinsky's "Revisionism" of the 1930s, but in the national security statism which emerged in the 1960s, associated with prominent figures like Moshe Dayan.

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