

I am not just any Jew; I am the grandson of a Holocaust survivor who escaped from Nazi Germany, to Switzerland, then to France, then to England, then, finally, to the United States where he and his family found safety and were able to begin new lives for themselves. After my grandfather escaped the Nazis in late-1939, it took more than six years to defeat Germany and more than eight years for the world to acknowledge the sovereign Jewish State of Israel. While my grandfather was able to survive and thrive in the United States I vehemently maintain that Israel's continued survival as a Jewish State is of the utmost importance for Jews around the world. Imagine someone is being persecuted in his country, and not a single nation will take him in because "he doesn't belong;" that is how my grandfather felt. Now, however, Jews have a country where they *inherently* belong, and, frankly, the security of knowing they will always belong in Israel is worth doing anything it takes to *maintain* Israel as a Jewish State.

Eight years is actually a relatively short amount of time considering that Theodor Herzl began the Zionist movement at the end of the 19th century for the same reason that Israel was established in 1948. Herzl believed that a Jewish state was necessary for Jews around the world who, like my grandfather, were not wholly considered a member of any nation and were constantly dealing with the overwhelming anti-Semitism that existed in Europe. While there was debate among different factions of the Zionist movement, many Zionists believed there was a precedent to establish the Jewish homeland in Israel due its biblical and archaeological significance. Today, the only thing that has changed with respect to the Zionist movement is that Israel is no longer an idea, but rather a thriving Jewish state with a government, citizens, industry, military, etc.

Even though the Zionist movement has existed for over 120 years and Israel is nearly 70 years old, the attitude and actions required for members of the Zionist movement have changed very little. Just as bystanders and those who were indifferent during the Holocaust are equally at fault for the Nazi's genocide, Zionists today cannot sit idly by as people, terrorist groups, and whole nations continue to oppose and threaten Israel's existence. To be a Zionist today requires being an advocate for Israel and actively speaking out against those who condemn Israel and Jews' right to a state of their own. Zionists must take an active role in supporting the state of Israel. Israel is much more than our religious and cultural capital. To many, including myself, Israel is our voice. Without Israel my voice is as strong as any individual, but Israel gives me, and every Jew around the world, the voice of a nation. Thus, wherever Jews are living they must understand that their safety is at least in-part a result of their having a Jewish State to not only fall back on if anything happens where they live, but also to give our scattered Jewish population the unified voice of a powerful political entity. Therefore, being a Zionist means wholeheartedly supporting Israel and ensuring its sustained existence as the Jewish religious capital, a safe haven, and the voice for all Jews around the world.