

Gol Kalev's book

I agree with Gol Kalev's drift that the premise, practice and context of Judaism is now more Zionism than religion, but there are quibbles (January 10, 2022).

Bismarck died in 1898 – a year after the first Zionist Conference but also after a decade's exile to retirement. When did Herzl converse or write to him? Europe was the global power center after it perfected cannon-armed sailing ships by 1600 – till the USN outbuilt the British by 1944. Before fire-armed Europe, the Moslem Arabs, Turks and Moguls were the power, the culture, and the trading economy from Spain to North India and eastward. China was the East and sent a fleet twice into the Indian Ocean but preferred to stay at home and “pull down the blinds” till the British broke in the 1840's Opium Wars.

China, and Sparta before it, are fatal lessons on why one must not make an enemy of change itself. A point our Hatam Sofer guided haredim to consider, because of their demographic success and need to be as self-supporting as other sectors. However, Kalev picked up some US sanctimoniousness about Europe in his New York banking years. The very prosperous second half of the late century was a bit of an exception even in the US, grounded in the “GI Education Bill” and Cold War spending as a Keynesian multiplier and patriotic party whip. *Gentleman's Agreement* was shot on the eve of Israel's Independence. Antisemitism was kept on the ventilator by the likes of the John Birch Society, and has been reinflated in colleges largely by the arrival there of the children of the Moslem immigration wave and Arab petro-funded endowments since 1973. A positive point needing further research is the pre-Enlightenment, when everybody's primary identity was religious. Since the Revolutionary Epoch, primary identity has been national and usually linguistic. That is why Hebrew-speaking Israel is vital to the Jewish future by jumping the present's fences. Those with Talmudic expertise would be more constructive to train priorities from the mitzvot to match up Halacha with secular law (Napoleonic Code and Blackstone Law of England) with comment and comparison on the principles and details. Then do likewise on Newton, Darwin, Freud and Einstein, their pupils and successors.

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Kalev's Eurocentrism?

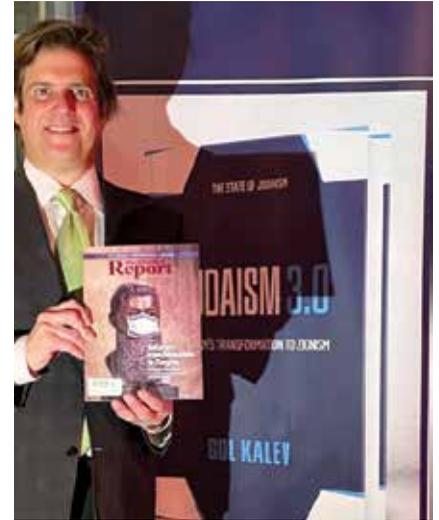
I read the long book excerpt twice and still don't see why Gol Kalev thinks his relabeling

of Judaism will help Jews and Israelis combat antisemitism/Israel-bashing. If anything, Kalev's overemphasis on the Europeans' sins excuses the Jew/Israel hatred that is rampant among Islamists, American “Woke” progressives, and the Palestinian leaders who have prioritized attempts to destroy the nation-state of the Jews over building a state in which the Palestinians could become productive citizens. (Apparently, it is just too much for the Jews to expect that the Palestinian state would have to coexist, peacefully, with the nation-state of the Jews). Furthermore, I have to say that I found some of Kalev's statements (European Jews' post-Emancipation business activities harmed working-class Europeans; much of the criticism of Israel is legitimate) to be out-of-place in a work directed at combating Israel-bashing. The truth is that Jews were always a people with an attachment to a land, in addition to having a shared religion. Even the haredim who opposed modern Zionism agreed that our ancestral home was centered around Jerusalem; they prayed, daily and fervently, for a return to Zion. Their “anti-Zionism” arose from their belief that we could return only when God sent the Messiah. Again, Kalev's Eurocentrism plays into the hands of the Israel-bashers who claim that Ashkenazi Jews have no roots in the Middle East.

The excerpt ends touting the value of *tikkun olam*. Ironically, non-Orthodox streams of Judaism have been criticized for placing too much emphasis on the general (repairing the world) and not enough on the particular (like observing Shabbat and kashrut). Yes, it is true that Israel offers quick and effective assistance wherever disaster strikes, but you don't have to be Jewish to do good deeds. I hope Kalev's book gives some specific examples of ways in which we can expose and refute the lies Israel's enemies are spreading about her.

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Gol Kalev responds: Thank you for your comment. Indeed, an excerpt by its nature can at times miss the big picture in a book. The bulk of my book is an analysis of long-term shifts in Israel and in North American Jewry (together 85% of World Jewry), as well as assessment of American and global trends that impact the state of Judaism. Those show that we are already in Judaism 3.0 – that both Jews and non-Jews relate to Judaism through the prism of Zionism – whether in positive or negative. Then the book goes through a discussion of practical implications of recognizing the



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Gol Kalev at the pre-launch of his book in Jerusalem on January 12.

transformation. One such implication is that it provides the relevant framework to counter Israel-bashing – the subject of the recent *Jerusalem Report* article. The Israel-bashing movement's starting point is that Judaism is separate from Zionism. Therefore, by their narrative, their efforts are not anti-Jewish. On the contrary – it helps Judaism rid itself of an anomaly that occurred within it: Zionism. Once it is broadly recognized that Zionism is now the organizing principle of Judaism, then Israel-bashing becomes synonymous with Jewish-bashing.

In the book, I go through a nuanced assessment of the Israeli-bashing coalition and argue the bulk of the existential threats comes from what I call the Israel-bashers-light. Those are mainstream people that would naturally deter from engaging in activities that would deem them as Jew-haters. I also show the magnanimous nature of the threat, and hence the need for a radical shift in approach, as opposed to simply more *hasbara* (as important as it is). Herzl was among the first to identify the magnanimous nature of the then-nascent European antisemitism threat. He ridiculed *hasbara* efforts, writing in his diaries: “Above all, I recognized the emptiness and futility of efforts to combat antisemitism.” Recognizing that we are in Judaism 3.0 would neutralize much of the existential threat of the Israel-bashing movement, simply by instilling within them the consciousness that what they are doing is Jew-bashing. For more details, visit the book's website: Judaism-zionism.com.