Know from where you are coming in order to know where you are going

ABSTRACT. In *A Just Zionism*, Chaim Gans presents a philosophical analysis of the justice of contemporary Zionism as realized by the State of Israel. He argues forcefully that ethnocultural nationalism can be just, and boldly advocates a two state solution, a Palestinian state living side by side Israel in secured borders, along the 1967 Green Line. Gans also addresses the discrimination Israeli-Palestinians suffer at the hands of the Israeli establishment, calling for the introduction of egalitarians norms and legal standards. This Appraisal analyses Gans’ main arguments and pitfalls. While applauding the book’s obvious strengths, it also criticizes some of its contentions and misgivings.

I. INTRODUCTION
In the past twenty years it has become fashionable to attack Israel. Together with the “new historians” a new phenomenon has emerged: Post-Zionism, which essentially is anti-Zionism. The Zionist movement is depicted as colonialist, exploitative, ruthless, discriminatory, unjust (Karsh, 2000). Post-Zionism downgrades - if not completely dismisses - the Israeli claims for the preservation of Jewish heritage and the establishment of a Jewish cultural home in the only part of the world where Jews feel cultural and ancestral connectedness. These claims are of no importance in the eyes of Post-Zionists because in their view the success of the Zionist movement came at the expense of the Palestinian right to self-determination.

Zionism as a revolutionary movement meant to found a Jewish society, free of prejudice and prosecution, where Jews could live as a unified, independent people in a
land of their own. The land is Zion, or Israel, the land of the Bible, the only land that has captured the imagination of Jewish people for many generations. The Zionist idea was to inhabit the land of the Jewish ancestors and to create there a new Jew (Sabra), who is able to lead his life freely, practice his religion and culture with no bigotry and without apology; able to defend himself against anti-Semitic violence; cultivate his own land, and be productive and social. Zionism demanded a radical change in one’s life: Leaving one’s home, one’s country; travelling afar to a distant land; often changing one’s profession; getting accustomed to a new, rough environment; adopting for many a new language, Hebrew, that at that point of time was confined only to religious studies, not practiced in one’s daily life. Zionism attempted to establish Jewish communal life at the expense of personal bourgeois comfort and the good life of the individual. Collective goals were held superior to individual ambitions. Indeed, Zionism required a significant personal sacrifice in order to create something new for future generations of Jews. In short, Zionism as a revolutionary movement was about individual and social redemption and emancipation, the gathering of exiles, and the creation of a new person, of a new society, in the old land of the Bible. David Ben-Gurion wrote:

The meaning of the Jewish revolution is contained in one word—independence! Independence for the Jewish people in its homeland! Dependence is not merely political or economic; it is also moral, cultural, and intellectual, and it affects every limb and nerve of the body every conscious and subconscious act. Independence, too, means more than political and economic freedom. It involves also the spiritual, moral, and intellectual realms and, in essence, it is independence in the heart, in sentiment, and in will. From this inner sense of freedom outer forms of independence will develop in our way of life, social organization, relations with other people, and economic structure. Our independence will be shaped further by the conquest of labor and the land, by broadening the range of our language and its culture, by perfecting the methods
of self-government and self-defense, by creating the framework and conditions for national independence and creativity, and finally—by attaining political independence. This is the essence of the Jewish revolution.2

In A Just Zionism, Chaim Gans presents a philosophical analysis of the justice of contemporary Zionism as realized by the State of Israel (p. 5). Recognizing that the debate between Zionists and anti-Zionists is loaded with misconceptions, legends, twists and turns, Gans attempts to present the contested claims over Israel/Palestine in a fair and balanced manner. This review article discusses and expands upon some of the themes raised by Gans: Jewish historical rights, the role of myths in Zionist historiography and the concept of Zionism as ethnocultural nationalism.

Following Gans’ argument, I contend that Israel should amend its state symbols so as to accommodate for its Arab citizens and to strive to assure that minorities will not suffer from discrimination and prejudice. The Jewish people, arguably more than any other people, should be cognizant of minorities’ rights and the harms of bigotry. Indeed, a key measurement for the extent of democratization of any society is the status of minorities. The more egalitarian the society, the more democratic it is. Agreeing with Gans, it is further contended that the creation of a viable Palestinian state alongside the State of Israel is the key for solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and bringing peace and tranquillity to the troubled region. Two important documents are cited as starting points: President Bill Clinton’s parameters, and the Geneva Accord. Both detail the practicalities for resolving all bones of contention.

II. HISTORICAL RIGHTS

Gans argues that historical rights constitute a significant moral justification for the establishment of a Jewish state in Israel. Israel/Palestine was the consensus in the Zionist movement because Jews wished to return to the land of their forefathers, the Land of the Bible, where particular sites were important to the Jewish people, some of whom
regarded these sites as holy. The importance of historic connections to the land is ignored by people who argue that Jews may preserve their identity by settling in western democracies. Jews might preserve themselves in the physical sense within other nations, but their cultural identity might dissipate. Israel is the only place where Jews would be able to preserve and promote their heritage and culture. The historical rights argument, argues Gans, in conjunction with the horrendous scope and nature of the Holocaust, provided justification for a Jewish state in Israel (p. 25). Gans also argues that the Arab opposition to Zionism was justified and would have been even if the Zionist movement had not exceeded its initial aspirations (p. 25). After all, the Jews broke into the Arabs’ land in order to settle there, and Arabs had no assurance regarding the upper limit of their potential losses and any compensation for such losses (p. 49). With this argument perhaps Gans foreshadows his next book, *A Just Palestinianism*.

Gans offers a pharmacy analogy to illustrate the justness of the Jewish return to Palestine for the establishment of a sovereign, self-sufficient Jewish home, asking the reader to contemplate a mortally wounded person who has no way of saving her life other than by breaking into a pharmacy to steal the required medicine. Gans argues that this act is justified and, by implication, the Jewish return to Zion was justified, except that in Zionism, Jews took up permanent residence inside the pharmacy (p. 42). Many systems of justice grant the necessity defense to people who find themselves in life-threatening situations and who are able to rescue themselves only by committing acts which would otherwise be considered criminal (p. 48). Note that Jews did not “invade” just any “pharmacy”. Instead, Jews returned to the only “pharmacy” that contained medication suitable for their malady.

I find this example problematic. I am not convinced that the Zionists committed a criminal act when entering Palestine. One fact that Gans does not mention is that Jews purchased land from absentee Turkish landlords. Baron Benjamin (Edmond James) de Rothschild (1845-1934) was a pivotal figure in the purchasing of land, making use of his substantial fortune. Jews purchased neglected and malaria-infested land along the coastal
plain and in parts of the Galilee which they began to cultivate (Stein, 2009, 3). In addition, The Jewish National Fund (JNF, Keren Kayemeth LeYisrael) was established following the Fifth Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland in 1901 to buy land in Palestine for reclamation and Jewish settlement. The JNF built a worldwide fundraising organization, soliciting donations, selling stamps, and collecting money from "Blue Boxes" that were distributed in every school and also in private homes. The JNF purchased derelict land in the Yizrael Valley and other parts of Palestine and established settlements. By 1921, JNF-KKL purchases of land had quadrupled its land holdings, bringing them up to 25,000 acres. At the end of 1935, after 15 years of assiduous effort, JNF held 89,500 acres of land on which stood 108 communities mostly in the center of the country and in the valley regions. According to the JNF, in May 1948, the Jewish population of the State of Israel numbered 650,000 settled in some 305 towns. Two hundred and thirty three of these towns stood on lawfully purchased JNF-KKL land.4

Gans accurately notes that as long as the conflict continues and the mistrust between Jews and Arabs is present, the Jews must rely on their strengths. Jews must continue to live in their own national home which they are able to protect by their military force (p. 79). After all, I should add, history does not provide much assurance that other countries will go out of their way to secure Jewish existence.

III. MYTHS

Expulsion is an important component of the Israel national narrative, presaging the Jews’ return to Zion. Gans discusses the myth that the Romans expelled the Jews from the Land of Israel (p. 7). Indeed, exile and expulsions are common themes in the historiography of Israel. They are of utmost importance to the formation and sustenance of the Jewish national consciousness. Exile and expulsions undergird the history of wandering Jewish people who were forced to sustain themselves in four corners of the world while never forgetting their origins. Zionism reinforces the idea of Jews returning from exile to their promised land, yearning for Zion while in exile, and putting Jerusalem in the highest
point of prayers: “May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you, if I do not consider Jerusalem my highest joy” (Psalm 137:6) and “If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill” (Psalm 137:5). Jerusalem is never to be forgotten. The High Holidays end with the phrase "Next Year in Jerusalem", meaning that we all should celebrate the next New Year in Jerusalem. “Next year”, whenever that year will come.

The first supposed exile was from the Northern Kingdom of Israel, as is described in 2 Kings 17. According to this account, the capital of Samaria fell to the Assyrians about 722 BCE. Part of the population was removed from the land and taken to Assyria, to be replaced by peoples from the east. The Israelites taken from their land were later referred to as the Ten Lost Tribes. However, according to the text at least some of the population was allowed to remain. Archaeological studies suggest some exchange of population between the two areas, but it appears that the bulk of the population remained where it was (Grabbe, 2007, 149-150).

The next purported ‘exile’ came with the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians, first in 597 (when a few thousand were taken to Babylonia) and then in 587/586, when all the rest of the population except a few of the ‘poorest of the land’ were taken to Babylonia (2 Kings 24-25), according to the text. In fact, though the matter is currently debated, it seems likely that the majority of the population remained in the land, though there was a considerable reduction in population because of war and disease. Jerusalem itself remained uninhabited (Grabbe, 2007, 211; Scott, 1997; Grabbe, 1998).

Historians such as Israel Yuval (2006, 16-33), think that the Roman expulsion of the Jews is another Judeo-Christian myth, arguing that there is no evidence that such expulsion ever took place. In 66 CE Judaea rebelled against Roman rule. In 67 CE Vespasian brought an army and began to systematically take back land from the rebels, beginning with the north (Galilee). By 68 CE most of the country was pacified and Jerusalem was surrounded. Because of a civil war in Rome, which overthrew Nero, Vespasian did not press the siege but waited. Eventually, after several would-be
emperors had come and gone, Vespasian himself was declared emperor and sailed for Rome. He left his son Titus in charge. Once the throne was secure, Titus pressed the siege and took Jerusalem in the summer of 70 CE. The inhabitants of Jerusalem, with Jews from other parts of the country who had sought refuge there, and Jews who had been in Jerusalem for the Passover festival when the siege was laid, were either killed or enslaved. Few escaped or were spared. Yet most of the country was not involved in this final siege. Granted, many Jews had been killed as the Romans pacified the country and some took refuge in Jerusalem, but many Jews had returned to their homes and were not directly affected by the fall of Jerusalem. Some Sicarii had taken refuge in Masada which was not taken until about 73 CE. Yet the practice of Judaism was not forbidden, and most of the Jews were not expelled from either Judaea or Jerusalem (Grabbe, 1992, 445-561).

The final fight against the Romans came in 132 CE when the Jews of Palestine rebelled against the emperor Hadrian. There is little record of this important event, a couple of short notices in Latin writings and some rabbinic legends. When the manuscripts in the Judean Desert were unearthed in the 1950s and 1960s, letters and other documents relating to Bar Kokhva, the Jewish leader, gave some further information. The available information indicates that large numbers of both Romans and Jews died during the 3-year revolt, and that so many Jews were sold as slaves that the price dropped drastically. Jerusalem was turned into a new Roman city called Aelia Capitolina, and Jews were forbidden to enter it for a long time. Nevertheless, Judaism remained a tolerated religion, and the land outside Jerusalem was not forbidden to Jews. Indeed, the rabbinic academy was moved from Yavneh to Usha, and the Mishnah was produced in the land of Israel over the next 75 years or so (Grabbe, 1992, 601-605; Grabbe, 2000, 125-126).

Another account which Gans does not mention, one that we Jews read and reiterate every year when we read the Hagadah during Passover, is that our forefathers were enslaved in Egypt and built the mighty pyramids for Pharaoh. There is no proof for this but the story serves a purpose in the national narrative: Our journey from enslavement in
Egypt to liberty in Canaan/Israel (Shaw, 2003). The story became part of Israel and Jewish historiography without factual evidence, illustrating how the history of ancient Israel is not about the simple relaying of facts, but also serves moral and theological purposes, explicating a context of past, present and future that connects people, and fosters a sense of purpose that is of immense importance for maintaining society and culture.

IV. ETHNOCULTURAL NATIONALISM

It is constantly asserted that Zionism is ethnocultural nationalistic and that, by definition, ethnocultural nationalism is unjust. Gans, relying on his previous work, The Limits of Nationalism convincingly refutes the argument and further asserts that this kind of nationalism needs not necessarily be illiberal and regressive. In The Limits of Nationalism Gans (2003) discussed the justifications and limits of cultural nationalism from a liberal perspective, presenting a normative typology of nationalist ideologies and distinguishing between cultural liberal nationalism and statist liberal nationalism. In A Just Zionism, Gans attempts to offer a balanced view of the conflict between Jews and Arabs over the land called Israel/Palestine. He does not ignore the crude reality which the Jews have imposed upon its Arab citizens, arguing that Israel has applied its melting-pot policy to Jews only, never allowing it to be applied to members of other ethnoreligious and cultural groups residing within the state (p. 15). Yet Gans does not acknowledge that Israel employs perfectionist rather than neutral or universal policies, aimed at keeping Israel a Jewish democracy.6

In my view, Israel’s perfectionism is problematically manifested in its Law of Return, which grants every Jew the right to immigrate and settle in Israel.7 This Law, as described by David Ben-Gurion, is the law of perpetuity of Jewish history (Mendes-Flohr and Reinhart, 2010). Unlike Western nationalism, which identifies nationality with citizenship in the state, nationalism in Israel is identified with the Jewish majority. The Citizenship Law allows Jews who immigrated to Israel to receive citizenship almost
automatically. There are almost no other ways to attain citizenship. The problem in this law, I should clarify, does not lie so much with its granting automatic citizenship to Jews; rather, the problem is that non-Jews are not welcomed. Gans also finds this deeply problematic and notes that in effect Israel is opened to all Jews and closed to all non-Jews (p. 125). Together with Gans I urge state authorities to adopt more liberal, non-exclusionary migration policies.\(^8\)

Gans and I are also troubled by the Israeli treatment of guest workers. Since the 1990s, hundreds of thousands of guest workers from all over the world have arrived in Israel. They have become an integral part of Israeli economy. Some of them are raising families in Israel. Their children attend Israeli schools, speak Hebrew, and see Israel as their home, but they are not allowed to have permanent status, and the Israeli authorities can force them to leave the country. Gans appropriately sees this policy as unjust and irresponsible, asserting that Israel should allow these families complete integration, enjoying full civic rights (p. 128).

Gans and I also think that Israel has a duty to take in refugees and persecuted people. Israel, the state of the Jewish people who suffered throughout the ages from prejudice and persecution, should be attentive to the cries of people who now find themselves in a similar predicament. Learning from history, Israel need not turn a blind eye to the plight of people. One of the very first decisions made by Prime Minister Menachem Begin after he came to power in 1977 was to admit Vietnamese refugees and to grant them Israeli citizenship, comparing their situation to the plight of Jewish refugees seeking a haven during the Holocaust. Between 1977 and 1979, Israel welcomed over three hundred Vietnamese refugees.\(^9\) Some 19,000 asylum seekers are presently in Israel. The largest groups are from Eritrea (9,000), Sudan (7,000) and Congo (300).\(^10\) They should be able to lead their lives as free people in society, contributing to its economic prosperity and vitality.

V. State Symbols and Languages
Israel reinforces Jewish hegemony through the design of state symbols. Only Jewish themes and people are represented in names of governmental institutions, in the design of the national flag, and in the words of the national anthem. This, argues Gans, cannot be justified (p. 138). I agree wholeheartedly. I have previously observed that the Israeli national anthem explicitly ignores the multicultural and multinational character of the state, arguing that a state anthem should represent all people in a nation, not just the majority of the people. We should learn from the lessons of other democracies that were bold enough to change their respective anthems in order to represent all factions of their populations (most notably South Africa, the "rainbow" nation, after 1994). Israel needs not necessarily adopt a different anthem. It may simply change a few words: instead of "Zion" to speak of "Israel" or "our land"; instead of a "Jew" to speak of a "person" or "citizen". Such accommodations would make Israel a more democratic society. Symbols are important in the life of a nation (Cohen-Almagor, 2005, 265). Furthermore, the government needs to afford Arab citizens the opportunity to express their Arab culture and allocate the necessary resources for this purpose.

Arabic is one of the two official languages of the State of Israel. Therefore it should enjoy a dominant status and have the importance it deserves. Gans argues that the right to self-determination does not require that the language of those enjoying linguistic predominance in some geographical areas necessarily be the main language of the entire state (p. 143); nor should it be the only language. I have argued that Hebrew and Arabic should be taught at every primary and high school in addition to English. Language is a key factor in creating bridges between people - Israeli Jews and Israeli Palestinians (called also Israeli-Arabs), and between Jews and Arabs in general. Sign-posts should be written in Hebrew and in Arabic.  

VI. ARAB DISCRIMINATION

Maintaining a Jewish majority and facilitating security do not justify systematic discrimination in all spheres of life. As Gans correctly and emphatically notes, equal
budgetary allocation per capita should be granted for the education of Jews and for the education of Israeli-Arabs. Similarly, the provision of funds per capita for religious services for Jews and Arabs should be guided by egalitarian principles (p. 139). I agree with Gans that discrimination against Arabs is present in Israel in many contexts, and it is reprehensible and unwarranted. Arabs should be equal to Jews qua being Israeli citizens. All Israeli citizens should be equal before the law, regardless of national affiliation, religious beliefs and political stands, formally as well as practically.

The present situation in Israel can be described by the distinction between formal citizenship and full citizenship. The notion of citizenship is commonly perceived as an institutional status -- all who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed. Israeli-Jews enjoy full citizenship, meaning they are entitled to equal treatment under law. The situation is different with regard to the Israeli-Palestinians who comprise about 20 per cent of the population. The Israeli-Palestinians do not in practice enjoy the same rights. They have to live with limitations on their freedoms which the Jewish majority does not bear. For example, Israeli-Palestinians pay more income tax than Jews because they cannot enjoy discounts given to those who serve in the army. Arabs will have more difficulties than Jews in obtaining licences for extending their homes, or for building new ones. They face difficulties in buying or even renting a flat in a Jewish neighbourhood. The budgets of Arab municipalities stand in no comparison to those of Jewish municipalities. Consequently, the infrastructure of Arab villages and towns is substandard. There are not enough classes in Arab towns and villages. Arabs who graduate find it difficult to get a job in government offices. In addition, being a Palestinian-Arab in many cases 'guarantees' that a worker's salary would be lower than that of a Jew who is doing the same work (Cohen-Almagor, 1991; Haider, 2009; Yakobson and Rubinstein, 2010; Nahshoni, 2010; Lubell, 2010; Cashman, 2010.).

Israel’s Declaration of Independence affirms that Israel will foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; that it will be based on the foundations of liberty, justice and peace; that it will ensure complete equality of social and political
rights to all of its citizens irrespective of religion, race or sex, and that it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture. However, there is a substantive gap between the rhetoric and the practice. The moral objectives of this Declaration should be made manifest so that there is true equality among all Israelis. People are morally equal to others.

A TWO-STATE SOLUTION

Gans proposes the formation of two states that live side by side: A Jewish-Zionist state, Israel, and a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. Gans argues that a Palestinian state in which Arabs enjoy self-determination would solve the problem of inequality in the normative status of Jews and Palestinians in the global realm, and would reduce the number of Palestinians living under unjust conditions (p. 79). Indeed, the existing occupation of the West Bank is evil. All people are born free, wish to lead our lives free, and enjoy the marvels of life with autonomy and self-determination.

I believe that if there is a will, there is a way. Both Israelis and Palestinians need to understand that peace is a precious commodity and therefore be prepared to pay high price for its achievement. Both sides should reach a solution that is agreeable to both, not only to one of the sides. The peace deal should be attractive to Israelis and Palestinians equally. It cannot be one sided, enforced or coerced. Like Gans I think that of all the possible solutions presently on the table, a two state solution is the most viable (Bhaduri, 2007). Gans did not provide a detailed plan as to how to resolve the contentious issues. I believe that good starting points are the Clinton parameters and the Geneva Accord.

Both documents lay the foundations for resolving the conflict:

Borders – Israel will withdraw to the Green Line, evacuating settlements and resettling the settlers in other parts of the country. Major settlement blocs may be annexed to Israel upon reaching an agreement with the PA of territory exchange that will be equal in size. At the Taba talks, the Palestinians presented a map in which Israel would annex 3.1
percent of the West Bank and transfer to the PA other territory of the same size (Beilin, 2004, 239). Yossi Beilin said that they were willing to concede Israeli annexation of three settlement blocs of at least 4 percent of the West Bank (Beilin, 2004, 246).

**Territorial contiguity** – a major elevated highway will connect between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to allow safe and free passage. The road will be solely Palestinian. No Israeli checkpoints will be there.

**Security** – The Palestinian sovereignty should be respected as much as possible. Checkpoints will be dismantled. Only the most necessary will remain, subject to review and necessity. The Palestinian state will be non-militarized. This issue was agreed upon in 1995. Also agreed upon a joint Israeli-Palestinian patrols along the Jordan River, and the establishment of a permanent international observer force to ensure the implementation of the agreed security arrangements (Beilin, 2004, 169).

**Jerusalem** – What is Palestinian will come under the territory of the new capital Al Kuds. What is Jewish will remain under Israeli sovereignty.

**Haram al-Sharif** – Palestine will be granted extraterritorial sovereignty over the site under Waqf administration. Jews will enjoy right of access.

**Water** – Israel and Palestine should seek a fair solution that would not infringe any of the sides and will assure that the Palestinian people will have the required water supply for sustenance and growth.

**Terrorism and violence** – Both sides will work together to curb terrorism and violence. There is zero sum game between terror and peace. Both sides will ensure that their citizens on both sides of the border reside in peace and tranquility.

**Incitement** – Both sides will overhaul their education curricula, excluding incitement, racism, bigotry and hate against one another. The curricula should reflect language of peace, tolerance and liberty (Cohen-Almagor, 2006).

**Prisoner exchange** – As an act of good will, and part of the trust-building process, Israel will release a number of agreed upon prisoners. In return, Gilad Shalit and other Israeli
prisoners (if any) will return home. With time, as trust will grow between the two sides, all security prisoners will return home.

**Right of return** – the 1948 Palestinian refugees will be able to settle in Palestine. Israel will recognize the Nakba and compensate the refugees for the suffering inflicted on them. No refugees will be allowed to return to Israel. This dream should be abandoned as it might bring about the end of Zionism.\(^\text{15}\) At the same time, an agreed upon number of Palestinians who reside in different corners of the world will be welcomed to unite with their families in Israel.

Gans opposes a mass Palestinian return to Israel and supports the pre-1967 borders as the basis for negotiation (pp. 84-84). Here he represents the prevalent view of the Israeli left. Gans does not endorse the radical left position which speaks of the 1948 borders, or of one state solution that eventually would bring the end of the Jewish state. He opposes the one state solution because it does not fit the Zionist cultural narrative of people returning to the only land in which they could preserve their Jewish identity. Gans deems the 1948 border solution impractical, making his Israeli bias noticeable. Palestinian readers will be disappointed if they expected him to at least debate the issue. I should clarify that I do not endorse the 1948 border but I think Gans should have explained why returning to those borders is not a solution.

I asked Gans whether the book is an affirmation of his own political agenda. Gans answered that the writing of the book lead him to change some of his views, for instance about whether the Palestinians were justified in resisting every components of Zionism, not just the gross evils which Zionism has committed. Writing the book also made the details of the big principles sharper and clearer to him. It augmented his support for priorities for Jews in immigration to Israel and at the same time his opposition to the Law of Return as it is now phrased. Writing the book elucidated the distinction between the justified discrimination embodied in the Law of Return and the unjustified discrimination embodied in the prohibition of Palestinian family unification. There was a constant ping-
pong between his well-established views on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the
dissanonce sparked by probing of the many facets of contention, which lead him to
rethink and reshape his views.

VI. CONCLUSION

*A Just Zionism* is a compelling book. The reader cannot remain complacent in the face of
Gans’ arguments. The book will aggravate many people. People on the Israeli right would
not like it. Many Palestinians would not welcome Gans’ proposed solution because it
offers less than they desire. Many readers might find Gans’ argument much too general
regardless of their points of view. I asked Gans about this and his answer was that he tried
to provide an overview of the major historical components of the conflict rather than
getting bogged down in contested details. Indeed, the book is not written as historical
text. It is philosophical with a practical political agenda.

Zionism is an ongoing process. The concept has found many manifestations, in Israel
and in the Diaspora. For many Jews, one need not reside in Israel to be identified as a
Zionist. It suffices to identify with the goals of Zionism, the establishment of a Jewish
state in Israel and support of its existence. Some donate money for this cause. Others
speak, lecture, and advance the Zionist cause via the media.

Zionism has remained contested. Hamas does not recognize the Zionist venture. It
wishes to eradicate Israel from the map and to establish Palestine at its expense. Leaders
of a major Islamic nation, Iran, voice the same desires. Two of Israel’s neighbours, Syria
and Lebanon, are in a state of war with the Jewish state and contest its borders. For more
than sixty years since its establishment, Israel has withstood many challenges and
overcame sturdy opposition. To be successful, Zionism must find a way to integrate into
the Middle East and to garner acceptance especially among the nations surrounding
Israel.
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All references in parentheses are to Gans’ book, *A Just Zionism* (2008). I thank Chaim Gans for comments on an earlier draft, the referees of *Ethical Perspectives* for their constructive criticism. I am also grateful to Lester Grabbe, Ann Bartow and Alan Roth for their kind assistance.


3 In his comments, Gans clarifies: “My discussion is in the realm of public law and political theory, concerning group-acts done for achieving political goal, not in private law and private morality, concerning individual transactions. Individual private transactions cannot serve as justification for group’s political goals. The same, applies to the individual rights claims of the Palestinian refugees. They evade the political issue”.


5 See also “Introduction to Pyramids”, *National Geographic*, at http://www.nationalgeographic.com/pyramids/pyramids.html

6 In his comments, Gans writes: “I don't think the concept of perfectionism is applicable here. Perfectionism is a version of liberalism, where the Jewish state is not neutral because it advances a particular conception of the good, namely, the good for the Jewish people, but this doesn't mean that it is perfectionist. In fact, it is not. In other words, not every non-neutral liberalism is perfectionist. If Israel is at all liberal, than it is nationalist liberalism, not perfectionist liberalism”. On my part, I think Israel has exhibited a conflicted blend of Jewish-religious elements and liberal-democratic principles which make it a perfectionist form of liberal democracy. On the concept of perfectionism, and how it is distinguished from neutrality, see Cohen-Almagor (1994); De Marneffe (1990); Kymlicka (1989); Raz (1988); Schwartz (1973); Sher (1997); Klosko (2003); Nussbaum (2011).


8 They do have. A famous case at hand is the refusal to grant Meyer Lansky, associated with the American mafia, permanent citizenship. It was argued that Lansky was a person with a criminal past and was likely to endanger the public welfare. His application for Israeli citizenship was denied. And after the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on 4 November 1995, the then Minister of the Interior Ehud
Barak issued orders preventing the entrance of nine American Jews who were affiliated to the Kahanist movements in the United States. This measure was taken out of fear that they might work to undermine law and order and might pose a threat to state security. See Cohen-Almagor (1997).


11 Key sign-posts should be written also in English (as now is the case) for tourists who make Israel a "must see" in their travels. See Cohen-Almagor (2005, 265) and Cohen-Almagor (2008).


15 Today, more than 4.2 million Palestinian refugees are dispersed across areas of the Middle East in which their forefathers originally took refuge, with others dispersed across the world. See The UN refugee Agency, http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/search?page=search&docid=4444afcb0&query=palestinian%20refugee%20number