The Palestinians Before Oct 7
Lecture Week 2
Anti-Semitism and the Rise of Political Zionism

I. Political Zionism v. Religious Zionism

A. "Zionism:" The political movement to create a Jewish State or Kingdom, ideally in the historical Holy land, that is, Palestine

B. Reasons for a "return?" for a "state"

1. "religious association" of Jews to Palestine?? (true for thousands of years)
2. "persecution of Jews" by Christians?? (true for over a Thousand years)

C. "B 1&2" has been true for centuries, but never produced a movement to create a Jewish state: What changed in the 19th century?

II. Before the French Revolution

A. Jewish life in Christian Europe prior to French Revolution: exclusion, segregation, persecution, deadly assaults ("pogroms")

1. (city) Ghetto; (agrarian) *schtetl*
2. Legal exclusion from most professions, from integration in broader gentile life
3. The Christian language of oppression is religious: "enemies of Christ" "Christ killers" defilers of Christian sacred symbols

III. Then, the French Revolution and the Emancipation of Jews

1. The Principles of the Enlightenment are promulgated and spread by the French Revolution: "Reason" and true knowledge, gained from science, shall prevail over the religious bigotry and superstitions of the past; "reason" shall lead the way to a more egalitarian, most intelligent future for human beings
2. "The Declaration of the Rights of Man," "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity" all explicitly includes Jews, in what will be called the "Jewish Emancipation"
3. Jews are explicitly freed from the restrictions, the exclusions of the past;
4. For the first time, the promise of human and legal equality, of the hope to live in the Christian world free from the discriminations and persecutions of the past, opened for Jews.

IV. The "Deal?" Jews for their part should "assimilate," that is, look and talk and dress like everyone else, become indistinguishable from the non-Jews that surrounded them and with whom they were now allowed to mix

A. Result: An enormous increase in Jewish participation and integration into the life of Christian Europe (at least in those areas most affected by the French Revolution):

1. now Jewish doctors, Jewish lawyers, Jewish political leaders, Jewish cultural and artistic leaders; integration and participation of Jews such as had never before been possible
2. The "cost" for Jews?? The sacrifices of assimilation; small but real (food, clothing, work on Saturday)

V. But, not all French, not all Europeans, embraced the ideas of the Enlightenment, of the French Revolution, not in 1789, not since then, not now

A. Those rejecting the ideas of the Enlightenment and French Revolution, rejecting political equality and, famously, rejecting reason and science (can you think of anybody today?) would rally politically around, and focus on, the issue of the Jewish presence and participation in broader Christian society

B. "Anti-Semitism" arises among the anti-French Revolution, "reactionariy" forces of European society (as opposed to anti-Jewish persecution of past; phrase "anti-semitism" invented in the late 19th century to pinpoint this new function of an old hatred

a. Note: difference between religiously defined persecution of Jews in the past versus this racially defined persecution and hatred of Jews in the present

C. The "Promise" of the Emancipation begins to be questioned

a. Basically acceptance of Jewish equality and participation by pro French Revolution forces ("Republicans")

b. But Rejection of Jews by anti-French Revolution forces ("reactionaries"); forces that will evolve from calling themselves "Anti-Semitic" parties or Anti-Semitic Leagues (their first self-designations) to calling themselves **Fascist, Nazi and Phalangist** parties after WWI. (Hannah Arendt's extraordinary insight from her "Origins of Totalitarianism")

VI. The Dreyfus Affair and Theodor Herzl

A. In France, in the birthplace of the Enlightenment, Jewish Military Officer Alfred Dreyfus accused and convicted of selling secrets to France's enemies; 1894

1. Portrait of Dreyfus - quintisential assimilated Jew, achieved highest rank of any Jew ever in French military
2. French army (Christian) Gerneral Staff conspire to fabricate evidence to blame the "Jew;" The Anti-Semitic newspapers of France (at least half of them) chime in to condemn Dreyfus in public opinion
3. The real spy, Walzin-Esterhazy, was thus allowed to sell secrets for much longer. He eventually flees to UK, where he subsequently confesses to his own treason; but French high command, backed by the right wing reactionary politicians, refuse to exonerate Dreyfus for years.
4. Emile Zola, George Clemenceau and the battle for citizen Dreyfus

B. Vienese journalist, Theodor Herzl, observes "Enlightened" France and Dreyfus trial

1. Sees "half empty cup" not half full, of an enlightened France
2. Herzl decides and declares in "Der Judenstat" (The Jewish State) that the Emancipation Promise has failed; "assimilation' has not worked to eliminate anti-Jewish hatred and persecution

3. Herzl redefines the "Jewish Problem:" not the problem of intolerance and lack of education. The Jewish problem was the problem of homelessness, statelessness
4. Thus the solution for the problem Jews face is a home, a state of their own
5. Herzl's program: get a great power to support the creation of a Jewish state, ideally in Palestine, but . . .
6. Herzl's insight: look for and find support among anti-semitic Gentiles: Arthur James Balfour 1903 Immigration bill f. 1917 Declaration

VII. Herzl founds the World Zionist Organization 1897

A. The Great Powers and the International Context: status quo against any change
   1. UK, France, Germany, Russia, Ottomans: all against any such program
B. Alternative "Homeland" Uganda (actually Kenya) proposal; Patagonia, et al.

VIII. Mainstream Jewish Reaction to Political Zionism

A. Religious response: Zionism as the "great heresy of the 19th century"
   1. Jewish religious establishment "bitterly opposed" to Zionism
B. Assimilated Jews' response
   1. Herzl's program premised on assumption of the "failure" of assimilation
   2. Many, many Jews have not given up on assimilation
   3. Herzl basically agreeing with anti-semites that Jews don't belong; anti-semites will indeed use exactly this line of reasoning in attacking Jews among them
C. Crucial point: Insistence on the creation of a state (not just a "home" or refuge from persecution) arose from the conditions of what Jews experienced in Europe, not from their experience in Palestine or the Muslim world in general

IX. Herzl dies 1904 assuming he had failed; Chaim Weizmann leads Zionist Organization and international efforts

A. World War I and the changed international context

X. The Other Interpretation of the "Jewish Problem:" Marxist-Socialist interpretations

A. The Jewish Problem as the problem of distorted class antagonisms
   1.Sins of Capitalist class: the sins of Jewish Capitalists
   2. Radicalism of the Working Class, Proletarians, blamed on the "Jews"
B. A Marxist but also Zionist solution: Jews should stop being so "bourgeois": Jews should create a Jewish social structure like the gentiles: proletarian class and a bourgeois class
   1. The Second Zionist Aliyah in Palestine