

The Blindness of the Secular State

Why Israel Cannot See the War It Is In

Abstract

This article, the fifth in the series, argues that the State of Israel suffers from a strategic blindness that has shaped seventy-eight years of its diplomacy and continues to undermine its position today. Israel grounds its legitimacy in international legal instruments—the Balfour Declaration, the San Remo Conference, the League of Nations Mandate, and UN General Assembly Resolution 181—rather than in the covenantal framework of the Hebrew Bible. This choice was rational in 1948 but has produced a structural problem: Israel seeks legitimacy from institutions whose deepest theological and civilisational foundations require Israel not to exist. The previous four articles in this series demonstrated that supersessionism—the doctrine that Jewish covenantal authority has been revoked or transferred—is the load-bearing premise upon which the authority of the Catholic Church, European monarchy, and Iranian theocracy were built, and that anti-Jewish narratives are structurally foundational to the legitimacy of these institutions. The present article argues that Israel’s refusal to engage this theological dimension constitutes a strategic surrender of the strongest legitimacy claim available to any state on earth. The Tanakh predicted Israel’s exile and restoration. The Quran assigns the Holy Land to the Children of Israel. History has fulfilled both. And Israel, citing a 1917 letter from a British Foreign Secretary, refuses to say so.

I. The Paradox

The State of Israel is the empirical fulfilment of a covenantal promise recorded in the Hebrew Bible three thousand years ago. The Tanakh predicted exile, promised return, and described restoration in geographic, national, and physical terms. The sun and moon have not departed. The exiles have returned. The language has been revived. The state exists in the precise territory described.

And yet the State of Israel has never—not once, in any official capacity—grounded its legitimacy in the Tanakh.

Instead, from the moment of its founding, Israel has sought legitimacy from the very international system whose theological and institutional foundations require Israel not to exist.

This is not merely an oversight. It is a strategic blindness with profound consequences. Israel has spent nearly eight decades arguing its case before institutions whose deepest structural logic is supersessionist—and wondering why the arguments never seem to land.

II. The Legal Legitimacy Framework

Israel's official legitimacy narrative, as articulated by its governments from Ben-Gurion onward, rests on a chain of international legal instruments:

The **Balfour Declaration** (1917)—a letter from the British Foreign Secretary to Lord Rothschild, expressing the British government's support for "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people." The declaration was made by the same British Empire whose Crown derives its sacral authority from supersessionist coronation theology—the same empire whose intelligence services would later facilitate the Muslim Brotherhood.

The **San Remo Conference** (1920)—at which the Allied Powers incorporated the Balfour Declaration into the framework of the post-Ottoman mandate system, assigning the mandate for Palestine to Britain. The conference was convened by European powers whose monarchies—the House of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, the House of Bourbon, the House of Savoy—all derived their metaphysical legitimacy from the doctrine that Israel's covenant had been transferred to the Church.

The **League of Nations Mandate** (1922)—which recognised "the historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine" and the "grounds for reconstituting their national home in that country." The League was dominated by European Christian states whose civilisational self-understanding was built on supersessionism.

The **UN General Assembly Resolution 181** (1947)—the Partition Plan, adopted by a body that would, within three decades, be led by a former Nazi intelligence officer (Kurt Waldheim) and would pass a KGB-engineered resolution declaring Zionism to be racism.

Israel's Declaration of Independence (1948) references "the natural right of the Jewish people to be masters of their own fate, like all other nations, in their own sovereign State" and cites the UN resolution. It does not cite Jeremiah, Deuteronomy, Ezekiel, or Isaiah. It does not ground the state's legitimacy in the covenant. It grounds it in international law and the right of national self-determination.

III. Why This Happened: The Secular Zionist Framework

This was not an accident. It was a deliberate choice, rooted in the ideology of political Zionism as formulated by Theodor Herzl and developed by the Labour Zionist movement that dominated Israel's founding generation.

Herzl's Zionism was a secular nationalist project. Its model was European nation-state formation—Italian unification, the emergence of the Balkan states, the nationalist movements of the nineteenth century. The Jewish people, in this framework, were a nation like any other nation, entitled to self-determination like any other nation, requiring a state like any other state. The justification was national, not covenantal. Historical, not theological. Legal, not scriptural.

Ben-Gurion and the Labour Zionist establishment that built the state were products of this framework. Many were socialist, secular, and explicitly non-religious. They saw the state as the product of human political action—pioneering, diplomacy, military struggle—not as the fulfilment of divine promise. The religious dimension was acknowledged culturally (Hebrew language, biblical place names, Jewish holidays as national holidays) but not as a source of political legitimacy.

This choice was understandable in context. The founders were building a state in a world of nation-states. International recognition was essential. Legal frameworks were the language of the post-war order. Citing the Tanakh as a basis for sovereignty would have been dismissed as theocratic anachronism by the very powers whose recognition Israel needed.

But the choice had a cost that is only now becoming fully visible.

IV. The Cost: Fighting on the Enemy's Terrain

By grounding its legitimacy in international law and institutional recognition, Israel placed itself in a position of permanent dependency on institutions whose deep structure is hostile to its existence.

Consider the implications:

The United Nations

Israel appeals to the UN as a source of legitimacy. But the UN is an institution whose General Assembly passed Resolution 3379 (Zionism = racism), whose Human Rights Council has issued more condemnations of Israel than of all other nations combined, whose relief agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) has been documented employing members of Hamas, and whose foundational logic—the equality of sovereign states—was from the beginning manipulated by the Soviet bloc and the Non-Aligned Movement to isolate Israel. The UN's institutional culture is saturated with the narrative that the KGB spent decades constructing. Appealing to the UN for legitimacy is like appealing to a court whose judges have already announced the verdict.

International Law

Israel cites international law as its foundation. But international law is interpreted by institutions—the International Court of Justice, the International Criminal Court—whose composition and political dynamics systematically produce outcomes hostile to Israel. The legal framework that Israel relies upon is the same framework that has been used to declare settlements illegal, to question the legality of the security barrier, and to issue arrest warrants for Israeli officials. The law Israel invokes is the law being used against it.

The Balfour Declaration and the British Mandate

Israel cites Balfour as a foundational document. But Balfour was a statement of British imperial policy, issued by a government that subsequently restricted Jewish immigration to Palestine (the 1939 White Paper), turned away ships of Holocaust refugees, and armed and officered the Jordanian Arab Legion that attacked the Jewish state in 1948. The power that issued the declaration spent the next three decades undermining it. Citing Balfour as legitimacy is citing a promise made by an empire that broke it.

The European Powers

Israel seeks recognition and partnership from European states whose monarchies, churches, and cultural institutions were built on the theological premise that Israel's covenant was revoked. The same states whose intelligence services facilitated the Muslim Brotherhood, hosted Khomeini, armed Iran, and extracted Arafat.

In every case, Israel is seeking legitimacy from entities whose structural incentives—theological, institutional, geopolitical—run against acknowledging that legitimacy.

V. What Israel Cannot See

The Israeli political and diplomatic establishment operates within a secular-liberal framework that does not recognise theology as a category of political analysis. Israeli diplomats are trained in international law, political science, and strategic studies. They are not trained to identify supersessionism as a structural force in international politics.

As a result, Israel consistently misdiagnoses the hostility it faces.

When European states vote against Israel at the UN, Israeli analysts attribute it to oil interests, Muslim immigration, or leftist ideology. These factors are real, but they are surface phenomena. The deeper structure—that European civilisation was built on a theological premise that requires Jewish sovereignty to be illegitimate—is invisible to a secular analytical framework.

When the Islamic Republic of Iran declares its commitment to Israel's destruction, Israeli analysts treat it as a geopolitical threat to be managed through deterrence, intelligence, and diplomacy. The theological dimension—that Wilayat al-Faqih requires the denial of Jewish sovereignty for its internal coherence—is noted by specialists but not integrated into strategic thinking.

When progressive movements in Western universities adopt anti-Zionist positions with quasi-religious fervour, Israeli commentators attribute it to ignorance, antisemitism, or political fashion. The structural observation—that these movements are inheriting a secularised form of supersessionism, in which “the oppressed” replace “the Church” as the new covenantal community and Israel is cast in the role of the superseded order—is rarely articulated.

Israel fights each battle individually—a UN vote here, a BDS campaign there, a nuclear negotiation elsewhere—without recognising that all of these battles are expressions of a single underlying structure: the theological requirement, shared across Christian and Islamic civilisations, that Jewish sovereignty must not be acknowledged as legitimate.

VI. The Tanakh as Strategic Asset

The irony is that Israel possesses the most powerful legitimacy claim available to any state on earth—and refuses to use it.

No other nation can point to a three-thousand-year-old text that predicted its exile, promised its return, described the geographic territory of its restoration, and was then empirically fulfilled in documented historical events. No other nation's founding narrative is corroborated by its adversaries' own scriptures—the Quran assigns the Holy Land to the Children of Israel in language that Islam holds to be the uncorrupted word of God.

This is not a religious argument in the narrow sense. It is an argument about the coherence of civilisational narratives. Israel can say to the Christian world: your own theology predicted our permanent displacement, and history proved it wrong. Israel can say to the Islamic world: your own scripture assigns this land to us, and your denial of that assignment contradicts your own Book. Israel can say to both: the text you claim as authoritative affirms our presence here.

No international legal instrument can match this. Balfour can be revoked. UN resolutions can be passed and repealed. International law can be reinterpreted. But the Tanakh's covenantal assertions—and the Quran's corroborating testimony—cannot be amended by a General Assembly vote.

VII. The Objection and Its Answer

The obvious objection is: a modern democratic state cannot ground its legitimacy in scripture. This would be theocratic, illiberal, and unacceptable to the international community.

This objection confuses two different things.

Grounding legitimacy in the Tanakh does not mean governing by religious law. It means identifying the source of the state's right to exist in its most fundamental and unassailable terms. Israel can remain a democratic, pluralist, legally secular state while simultaneously asserting that its existence fulfils a covenantal promise that predates every international institution currently in operation—and that is affirmed by the scriptures of both civilisations that contest it.

The United Kingdom manages this dual structure. The British monarch is crowned in a religious ceremony, anointed with holy oil, and serves as Supreme Governor of the Church of England—while governing through a secular Parliament under the rule of law. Britain's legal authority is parliamentary; its symbolic authority is theological. No one considers this theocratic.

Israel could adopt an analogous framework: legal authority derived from democratic governance; existential legitimacy grounded in covenantal continuity. The two are not in conflict. They operate at different levels.

VIII. The Strategic Reframing

If Israel were to integrate the supersessionism analysis into its strategic thinking, several things would change.

First, Israel would stop being surprised by European hostility. It would understand that hostility toward Jewish sovereignty is not a policy choice by individual governments but a structural feature of a civilisation built on the premise that Jewish sovereignty should not exist. This does not mean hostility is inevitable or unchangeable—but it means the baseline is opposition, and every diplomatic gain is won against structural gravity, not with it.

Second, Israel would reframe its public diplomacy. Instead of arguing about borders, settlements, and legal technicalities—terrain on which it is permanently disadvantaged—Israel would pose the deeper question: why does the international community find it so difficult to accept the legitimacy of a Jewish state? The answer—because the theological foundations of Western and Islamic civilisation were built on the assumption that it shouldn't exist—is a question most interlocutors have never confronted. Forcing that confrontation changes the terms of every subsequent debate.

Third, Israel would engage differently with the Islamic world. Instead of treating the conflict as purely territorial, Israel would point out that the Quran itself assigns the Holy Land to the

Children of Israel—a fact that most Muslims have never been taught, and that the clerical establishments of both Sunni and Shia Islam have a structural interest in suppressing. This is not an argument against Islam. It is an argument within Islam, using Islam’s own scripture, against the political theology that has hijacked it.

Fourth, Israel would understand Iran differently. The Islamic Republic’s hostility is not primarily strategic—it is theological. Wilayat al-Faqih requires the denial of Jewish sovereignty. No negotiation, no deterrence, no diplomatic breakthrough can resolve a contradiction that is embedded in the structure of the regime’s own legitimacy claim. The only resolution is the weakening or transformation of the theological framework itself—which is already underway within Shia Islam, as the Najaf seminary’s rejection of Wilayat al-Faqih demonstrates.

IX. Conclusion: The State That Won’t Claim Its Own Story

Israel is a state that fulfils a prophecy and denies that the prophecy matters. It is the empirical refutation of supersessionism and yet refuses to name supersessionism as the problem. It possesses the most ancient and most corroborated legitimacy claim of any nation on earth and instead cites a 1917 letter from a British foreign secretary.

The founders’ choice to ground legitimacy in international law was rational in 1948. Seventy-eight years later, the cost of that choice is clear. The international legal framework has been systematically turned against Israel. The institutions Israel appeals to are structurally hostile. The theological dimension of the conflict—the one dimension where Israel’s position is unassailable—remains unengaged.

The four preceding articles in this series have demonstrated that supersessionism is not a historical curiosity. It is the active, functioning foundation of hostility toward Jewish sovereignty—operating through the Catholic Church, European monarchies, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Western intelligence services, the Soviet bloc, and the United Nations itself.

Israel cannot defeat a theological argument with a legal brief. It cannot answer a civilisational claim with a UN resolution number. It cannot resolve a three-thousand-year-old contest over covenantal authority by citing the San Remo Conference.

“The Tanakh made a promise. History kept it. The Quran corroborates it. And the state that embodies its fulfilment refuses to say so.”

That refusal is not neutrality. It is a strategic surrender of the strongest ground Israel holds—ceded voluntarily, to fight on terrain where the outcome was decided before the argument began.

This article is the fifth and concluding piece in a series. The preceding articles are: (1) “The Theology That Lost Its Timeline: Supersessionism, Covenant, and the Crisis of Legitimacy in European Political Tradition”; (2) “The Guardian Who Contradicts His Own Book: Islamic Supersessionism, Wilayat al-Faqih, and the Quranic Case Against Shia Clerical Authority”; (3) “The Cairo–Qom Pipeline: How the Muslim Brotherhood’s Antisemitism Became the Theology of the Islamic Republic of Iran”; (4) “The Handlers and the Handled: Western Intelligence, Islamist Movements, and the Theological Architecture of Managed Chaos.”

Sources Consulted

- Avineri, Shlomo. *The Making of Modern Zionism: The Intellectual Origins of the Jewish State*. New York: Basic Books, 1981.
- Balfour Declaration (1917). Letter from Arthur James Balfour to Lord Rothschild, 2 November 1917.
- Ben-Gurion, David. *Israel: A Personal History*. New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1971.
- Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel (1948). State of Israel official archives.
- Friedman, Isaiah. *The Question of Palestine: British-Jewish-Arab Relations, 1914–1918*. New Brunswick: Transaction, 1992.
- Herzl, Theodor. *Der Judenstaat (The Jewish State)*. Vienna: 1896.
- League of Nations Mandate for Palestine (1922).
- Sand, Shlomo. *The Invention of the Jewish People*. London: Verso, 2009. [Cited as a contrasting view; this article disagrees with its conclusions.]
- San Remo Conference Resolution (1920).
- Schweid, Eliezer. *The Idea of the Jewish State*. Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1970.
- Soulen, R. Kendall. *The God of Israel and Christian Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996.
- UN General Assembly Resolution 181 (1947). Partition Plan for Palestine.
- UN General Assembly Resolution 3379 (1975). Repealed 1991.
- Wistrich, Robert S. *A Lethal Obsession: Anti-Semitism from Antiquity to the Global Jihad*. New York: Random House, 2010.
- Hebrew Bible / Tanakh: Jeremiah 31, Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 30, Ezekiel 36, Isaiah 11.
- Quran: Surahs 5:21, 5:43–44, 7:137, 17:104, 45:16.