



MERCAZ-Canada, MERCAZ USA, & Women's League for Conservative Judaism Biennial Essay Contest



Rethinking Zionism ~ What Does Zionism Mean to Me?

AWARDS:

Three Scholarships in the amounts of: \$1,000, \$850, and \$650 USD.

The scholarship will apply to any Conservative Movement sponsored Israel program (including Israel programs taking place from June 1, 2018 onward).

ELIGIBILITY:

Applicants must be residents of North America, in grades 7-12, and a member of a Conservative synagogue. Each participant may only submit one essay for consideration.

HOW TO ENTER:

Essay Contest Opening:

October 15, 2017. Entry forms and additional information can be found at www.masorti-mercaz.ca, www.mercazusa.org, or www.wlcj.org.

Deadline for Entries:

Entries must be submitted electronically by 9:00 am EST March 5, 2018. Late entries will not be accepted. MERCAZ and Women's League cannot be responsible for delayed or misdirected entries. Read receipt requests are recommended.

Announcement of Winners:

Winners will be notified by May 8, 2018.

Essay Format:

Essays must be submitted as a standard letter-sized document (8.5x11 inches) in Word or PDF using 12 point regular font, such as Times New Roman or Arial, with the entry form as a cover page. Essays should be double-spaced, up to 1000 words. Submitted essays must be the entrant's original work, with quotes properly cited. (Citations do not count towards the word count.)

Submission:

Entries must be submitted via email. Mailed entries will not be accepted. Essays, the accompanying cover page, and photo should be emailed to info@masorti-mercaz.ca with the subject "**MERCAZ USA/CANADA/Women's League Essay Contest**". By entering this contest, the student agrees that all information submitted becomes the property of MERCAZ – WLCJ to publish at their discretion.

For further information, questions, or comments, contact one of the sponsoring organizations.



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Please attach a current photo with your submission

With submission, you give MERCAZ USA, MERCAZ-Canada, & Women's League for Conservative Judaism the right to publish your name, city, state, synagogue and picture in our publications and on our websites.

Cover Page (Please write legibly. Illegible forms may be disqualified.)

Name: _____

Full Address (including city, state/province, zip/postal code):

_____ Telephone: _____

Date of Birth: Mo/Day/Year _____ Email Address: _____

Synagogue Information (name, address, city, state/province, zip/postal code):

Rabbi's Name: _____ Email Address: _____

Current School: _____ Current Grade: _____

Parent/Guardian 1 Name

Parent/Guardian 2 Name

Parent/Guardian 1 Email

Parent/Guardian 2 Email

Parent/Guardian 1 Phone

Parent/Guardian 2 Phone

Are you affiliated with a USY Chapter or Camp Ramah? If yes, which (include USY region if applicable)?

Israel program(s) you are considering* (Scholarships may be reserved for use on future programs from June 1, 2018 on.)

* All Conservative Movement trips are eligible for scholarship use. Writing a specific trip does not obligate you to use the scholarship only for that trip.



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Question: **Rethinking Zionism- What does Zionism mean to Me?**

Background: Zionism is the international movement dedicated to the creation and support of a Jewish national state in our ancient homeland Eretz Yisrael, aka Zion. The principles of Zionism are stated in the Jerusalem Program, the official platform of the World Zionist Organization (WZO) and Zionist Movement. According to the WZO, Zionism “views a Jewish, Zionist, democratic, and secure State of Israel to be the expression of the common responsibility of the Jewish people for its continuity and future.”

According to the Jerusalem Program, the foundations of Zionism are:

- The unity of the Jewish people, its bond to its historic homeland, *Eretz Yisrael*, and the centrality of the State of Israel and Jerusalem, its capital, in the life of the nation.
- Aliyah to Israel from all countries and the effective integration of all immigrants into Israeli society.
- Strengthening Israel as a Jewish, Zionist and democratic state, and shaping it as an exemplary society with a unique moral and spiritual character, marked by mutual respect for the multi-faceted Jewish people rooted in the vision of the prophets, striving for peace and contributing to the betterment of the world.
- Ensuring the future and the distinctiveness of the Jewish People by furthering Jewish, Hebrew and Zionist education, fostering spiritual and cultural values and teaching Hebrew as the national language.
- Nurturing mutual Jewish responsibility, defending the rights of Jews as individuals and as a nation, representing the national Zionist interests of the Jewish people, and struggling against all manifestations of anti-Semitism.
- Settling the country as an expression of practical Zionism.*

As Jews, we love Israel and take great pride in her accomplishments. From the Diaspora, we appreciate that Israel is a Jewish State. Shabbat is the official ‘weekend’. Jewish holidays are national holidays, and it is Jewish culture that permeates the very air of the land. At the same time, we are aware of our physical separation from the state. We see statements and actions by the Israeli government and the Chief Rabbinate that limit the expression of Jewish religious freedom in the Jewish State or otherwise frustrate our religious or ethical sensibilities. Nevertheless, Israel, both as our historic, ancient homeland and as a modern state, continues to be vital to Judaism on a national scale and personally.

In developing your essay, please consider the background above along with the following questions:

- How does Zionism change and evolve with new generations?
- Does Zionism call for a reciprocal relationship between Israel and the Diaspora?
- Do limitations or shortcomings within the State of Israel vis-à-vis religious freedom and/or social issues affect Zionism on the personal or national scale?

* The Jerusalem Program, <http://www.wzo.org.il/The-Jerusalem-Program>