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## Leftist Leader



Beilin. Zionist motivation and rhetoric Photo: Gil Yohanan

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## The last Herzlian

### With Yossi Beilin's departure, Israel lost greatest Zionist visionary of our time

Yoav Sivan

Regardless of how much the right wing may rejoice at Yossi Beilin's recent [resignation](#) from the Knesset, government in Israel has lost the greatest Zionist visionary of our time.

The central work of Beilin's life – promoting a two-state solution – is the logical extension of Theodore Herzl's dream. This may come as a surprise to some in the far-right who associate Zionism with the idea of Greater [Israel](#). Yet the readiness to compromise in order to secure the fate of the Jewish state has always gone hand in hand with Zionism.

Beilin's motivation and rhetoric have always been Zionist. He has understood that the prerequisite for Israel to remain both Jewish and democratic is to establish a Palestinian State alongside the Jewish one. Indeed, Herzl's Jewish State is also Yossi Beilin's.

For starters, Beilin's vision of Israel is as democratic as Herzl envisioned it could be. In his 1902 work *Altneuland*, for instance, Herzl described a society where women vote, avant-garde for the time. Beilin's Israel is progressive, with a modern, thriving economy imbued with achievements in science and culture. And Beilin's Israel is a Jewish state where religious figures and institutions are revered and respected, but where its political institutions are secular and provide equal rights and full participation to Arab citizens of the nation.

But Beilin shares more than Herzl's vision to secure a worthy homeland for the Jewish people. His political approach is reminiscent of Herzl's, based on a sincere sense of responsibility, a well thought-out program, and ultimately action.

Like Herzl a century before him, Beilin is a visionary who believes in seizing the day – that the best way to predict the future is to shape it.

In the Herzlian-Beilinian tradition, tough circumstances require public responsibility and accountability, which in turn calls for political and diplomatic action. Yossi Beilin has always been proactive in bringing about the change. Even when not in parliament or in government, he has been a pioneer for social advancement. Consider, for instance, his two flagship projects that he envisioned, initiated and realized, the Geneva Accord and Birthright. Both notions have echoed enormously in the public sphere.

Beilin is always rushing. The sense of urgency, evoking Herzl's, that dictates Beilin's actions because he realizes that time works against us. The longer you wait, the narrower the window of opportunity.

Though Beilin resigned from office before his dream was realized, his dream became part of the mainstream – however, few would admit its links to Beilin's allegedly radical views. Even Prime Minister Ehud Olmert deems as delusional those who seek a Greater Israel. Olmert has said repeatedly that if there is no Palestinian state, that would be the end of Zionism. The same

## Resignation

### Knesset bids farewell to Beilin / Amnon Meranda

Party leaders praise resigning Meretz-Yahad member. 'The extent of your contribution to the peace agreements is known only to those who are familiar with the details,' Barak tells Beilin

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Zionism that Herzl invented and Beilin has labored to secure.

Yet action is still lagging behind what is commonly perceived as the desired outcome by so many now – namely, a two-state solution.

It is of some consolation that Beilin's place in parliament has been taken by [Dr. Tzvia Greenfield](#), if only for a short time before the new election. Dr. Greenfield is one of Israel's most impressive political figures, an ultra-Orthodox woman whose deep commitment to Israel's democracy and to Judaism makes her a strong proponent for the separation of religion and state.

In the face of radicalism from the Right and from the Left, Yossi Beilin's entire political career has been proof of the noble notion that Zionism and democracy are not mutually exclusive. May Beilin stay in the public eye to see his dream come true.

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