

The speaker discusses their research focusing on the complexities of Jewish nationalism in Israel, particularly the meaning of Israel as a "Jewish state." They explore two main perspectives in the discourse around Israel's identity: one that views it as merely a state for Jews, based on its demographic majority, and another that emphasizes its constitutional expectation to align with Jewish traditions and values.

The speaker critiques the oversimplified notion of Zionism as a secularization of Judaism, suggesting instead that the relationship between the two can be better understood through the concept of supersessionism, a Christian theological term that describes the idea of one belief system replacing or claiming the authentic essence of another. They argue that Zionism, while establishing a Jewish national identity, simultaneously grapples with Jewish religious traditions.

The speaker emphasizes the historical context and ongoing debates related to Israel's identity, including the controversial 2018 law declaring Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people, and suggests that understanding these dynamics is crucial for comprehending contemporary Israeli politics and identity. They advocate for a re-examination of how Jewish and Israeli identity can embrace diversity, rather than conforming to the uniformity often sought by nationalism.

The speaker concludes by highlighting the importance of recognizing the multifaceted nature of Jewish identity and culture in discussions about nationalism and the Israeli polity, aiming to stimulate further reflection on these critical issues.