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War and Palestine

The great screenwriter remembers a wartime visit to the Holy Land

By Walter Bernstein

In the years 1943-44, as a soldier in the American Army, I spent time in what was then officially called Mandatory Palestine, the area mandated by the League of Nations to the British after World War I. Most Europeans just called it Palestine. The Jews who had settled there called it Land of Israel. The Arabs who lived there preferred Palestine or, for some of them, Southern Syria. I knew nothing of this and cared less. I was a correspondent for *Yank*, the Army weekly magazine and, although I am sure it was not its intent, the Army had cut me orders that allowed me to join the war wherever I saw fit. Flashing them successfully before any baffled officer who questioned me, I would hitchhike my way to the action, catching rides in planes or trucks or the occasional jeep. In those days, the war for me was the campaigns in Sicily and Italy, where I would temporarily join various units and write about them. The soldiers were bemused that I was there at all when I didn't have to be. They thought I was crazy. But I had had infantry training and carried a gun along with my Olivetti typewriter and a bedroll and so could be temporarily useful, and for much of the Sicily campaign I hooked up with a reconnaissance unit at the tip of our advance. The reason I was at the tip was that the Army was feuding with *Yank* and didn't want a *Yank* correspondent in Sicily. If found, I would be deported back to North Africa. I had decided that nobody would be dumb enough to look for me where there was a chance they might be shot. Mostly my little group advanced without incident while the Germans retreated, but not before mining everything in sight. We would hear a popping sound in the distance and know some unwary soldier had picked a cactus pear or an apple from a tree and it had gone off in his face. We liberated a hill town after a brief and bloody skirmish and I saw my first corpse, an Italian soldier lying in a ditch. He looked lightly asleep, as if a nudge would awaken him. I was not sure what I felt. Nothing seemed adequate. I was learning the uses of denial. Death could not possibly happen to me. But I had the immense luxury of leaving the war on my own terms and so, from time to time, I would repair to the more welcoming haven of Palestine or the lush pastures of Cairo and lie to myself that I needed rest and recreation.

In those days, Palestine was an R&R area for American soldiers, particularly the airmen. They were flown in from their various bases along the Mediterranean, deposited in hostels and taken to beaches during the day and nightclubs at night. There was little or no contact with the local population, whether Arab or Jewish. The Army felt this would expose the soldiers to exotic sexual practices or disease, the one inevitably following the other. This was true wherever the Americans went. The idea was to create a little bit of America to make soldiers feel a little less homesick. Everyone agreed this was a good idea. There was fresh milk to be drunk and sheets to sleep under, and after what they had been through, the airmen considered Palestine a fine and friendly place, a respite from killing or being killed.

I first came to Palestine after having spent six miserable weeks in Tehran, not by choice. I had been sent overseas to go to Moscow as the *Yank* correspondent there. In its unfathomable way, the Army had thought the best route was through Persia. This entailed a 42-day trip on a Dutch freighter from Philadelphia to the Persian Gulf and then a bone-cracking ride up to Tehran, where I was to report to our military attaché, who would then funnel me on to Moscow. By the time I got there, the Russians had changed their mind. They would accept a civilian correspondent, but not an Army one. This left me with no assignment. The military attaché was sympathetic. He ordered me to stay put until I heard otherwise. Given the Army, that could be forever. I felt trapped. Tehran was beautiful—snow-topped mountains

shimmering in the distance—but it was not Moscow. Its beauty was skin-deep. Up close, it was hot and dirty when it wasn't cold and dirty, and no one seemed to like Americans very much. It might have been different if the few who were there were combat troops who could be at least feared. The only job of these men was to ferry lend-lease material to the Russians. I filled the time by entering a boxing tournament. I had taken instruction on the Dutch freighter from one of the Navy gun crew who had just started a professional boxing career, and I had the dangerous delusion that I could fight a bit. My opponent would be selected from one of the men who drove the trucks that carried the military equipment from the gulf ports up to Tehran, where the Russians took over. The roads were either bad or nonexistent, and most of the drivers suffered from kidney problems due to the pounding they took. On the other hand, or possibly because of this, they looked very tough. My trainer was the resident *Yank* correspondent, a cheerful Irishman whose advice was to get in close and hit him in the kidneys. I was not sure I could do this. It would certainly invite retaliation, possibly severe. But I was saved by a command from *Yank* to go at once to Jerusalem and be part of a world-wide radio broadcast celebrating *Yank*'s first year. I flew, badly hungover after a boozy farewell from my Irish friend, but happy to escape.

And there was Jerusalem

The spell of great cities is hard to explain. Jerusalem was all past. History was not only in its stones, but in the air. As some cities smell of the sea or the automobile, Jerusalem smelled of its tangled, bloody history. You could look at a bare hillside and almost believe that a marvel had happened there. I checked in at the YMCA, an unlovely pile of Kansas City Gothic, and found the radio unit that was to give the broadcast. They assigned me a pair of small Arab boys as guides, cheerful and impish, their speech enlivened by slang they had acquired from the Australian or British or New Zealand troops who had preceded us. They even had a bit of Polish. They liked the idea of having an American to show around, sensing infinite rewards at the end. The broadcast went well. I had written a short, modest piece about what I had reported on the war so far, careful not to elaborate its nonexistent dangers beyond credulity, and read it to approving nods from my two guides. Afterward, I gave them candy. They said the Australians had also given them cigarettes. I said I didn't smoke. They took this as some kind of bad American joke and abandoned me on the spot.

I was back with no definite assignment. The war beckoned, but I decided it could continue to do without me for a while. I couldn't get to Russia, but I could still write stories about our brave fighting men. I trolled the rest areas and found waist gunners and tail gunners and fighter pilots who were braver than they had any right to be. They were having a great time in Palestine. They could sleep as late as they liked. The beds had sheets. Their stories were often hair-raising and they told them with eager innocence, pleased that a writer thought them important enough to write about and that the people back home would know about them. They were like children playing hooky. They reveled in their current freedom, but knew the truant officer would soon be coming for them. No good time lasted forever. I was careful to get their names and the names of their hometowns right, not wanting to think how many of them would never get home to read the stories.

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I had an introduction to an American who had settled here and was now an editor at the English-language newspaper, *The Palestine Post*, and looked him up. He generously invited me into his home for meals and talk. His name was Ted, and he was a New Yorker who had come to Palestine in the depths of the Depression, but not for economic reasons. He said he had wanted to live where he could walk down the street and nobody would call him a dirty Jew. He spoke as though no one but Jews lived here. He was married to a lively attractive Sabra fluent in English, Hebrew and Arabic. I marveled at how effortlessly she slipped from one language to another. Her attitude toward Arabs was one of friendly contempt. Their friends were mostly professionals like themselves, and the evenings would be filled with good food and local wine and intense conversation. One friend was the son of Judah Magnes, the president of the Hebrew University. He would report on the quarrels with his father over which kind of state Palestine would become after the war. President Magnes believed in a single binational state. His son did not. I listened without any particular interest. It all seemed faraway. We were all Jews; that in itself seemed enough. I had always felt thoroughly Jewish, happy in the diaspora. These Jews wanted to make a country here. It was all right with me; it wouldn't be my country. The war was what was meaningful, the fight against the Nazis, against fascism.

Often, the talk was about how to get refugees, the lucky few who had escaped the camps, into Palestine. They had nowhere else to go. Latin America was receptive, but you needed money for passage on a boat, and few had more than the clothes on their backs. The United States had imposed a punitive quota. The British patrolled the Palestine coast, turning back refugee ships. I saw a rusty freighter they had allowed to dock for refueling. The passengers were confined to the boat. They crowded the rails,

looking dumbly out at the promised land. A British escort ship lay outside like a dog guarding sheep. They were both gone by the morning.

During the day, I wandered around Jerusalem, inspecting the bazaars, waving away the peddlers selling pieces of the original cross. Lured by the pungent smell of spices and perfumes, I would stop and buy scents I would never use. Mostly, I just walked, inhaling the city, happily losing myself in the mix of people thronging the narrow streets. Most were Arabs or Jews, proximity taken for granted. Women strolled with covered heads, laughing behind veils. I was sure they were laughing at me, another military tourist. Jerusalem had seen enough of them. Some women were bolder, head uncovered, hips swinging, hair flowing down to their waist. Invitation in their eyes: Come, but beware. Soldiers from the desert campaigns were everywhere, hard-bitten Australians and New Zealanders you would not wish to cross. Where they had been was stamped in the lines on their weathered faces. Music was always in the air, escaping from the houses that lined the streets: the wailing Arabic sound that had echoes of the klezmer music I had grown up with; classical music from a phonograph; a child practicing scales on a piano. Sometimes I would stop walking and just listen. I visited the Wailing Wall and watched old bearded men and shawl-covered women rock back and forth, praying, and felt the distaste I always felt when encountering the Hasidim. They were what I needed to get away from. Maybe their medieval flimflam still belonged somewhere, but not in my neighborhood. My prejudice was total. I could not see behind their beards. The only Jews with beards I accepted were the members of a professional basketball team called The House of David, who only wore their beards as publicity and were probably not even Jews. The Hasidim offended my aesthetics and threatened my aspirations, which were to be totally assimilated. So far I had been successful. We had nothing in common except, of course, in other circumstances, we would have shared a boxcar on the way to the crematorium. I did not dwell too much on that bond. At night, I would find an outdoor cafe and, because of the blackout, eat my dinner in total darkness, unsure of what was on my plate. Occasionally, a German plane would appear out of the night like a guest at the wrong dinner party, make a desultory loop over the city, drop a single bomb and then disappear back into the dark. There seemed to be no good reason for this. Jerusalem contained nothing of military value. The bomb never seemed to hit anything of consequence. But the air was soft and the food tasty and the dark usually without menace, and all that was lacking was romance.

Out of curiosity, I attended a criminal trial I had heard about. Several hundred rifles and boxes of ammunition had been found in a kibbutz and six of its leaders arrested for arms smuggling. The trial was held in what had been a private house, and British soldiers patted you down as you passed through an elaborate doorway. Inside, more soldiers and a few journalists and civilians milled around while an Arab tea seller moved among them, carrying his cart and murmuring softly as he poured his tea. You had to prove you were either a relative or a bona fide journalist to get into the courtroom itself. I showed my orders, which had the usual effect of confusing everyone who read them, and talked fast. The courtroom was small and crowded and airless. The few chairs were taken by a few men and women from the kibbutz. The women looked worried, the men defiant, lined up against a wall, and watched the accused. They seemed very young in their shorts and open shirts, possibly in their 20s but with the baby fat not entirely gone. They stood at ease in the dock, looking unconcerned while the prosecutor made his case. He insisted they were part of a Jewish terrorist group devoted to expelling the British from Palestine. He carried on at length about this, using the word "terrorist" like a hammer. These men were terrorists—killers, pure and simple. The guns were to be used to kill British soldiers in the name of a Jewish state that did not exist. Innocent people would be killed. Occasionally, one of the young men would spot someone in the audience and smile reassuringly at them. The trial was being held in a British military court, the prosecutor a British colonel, as starched as his uniform. He was particularly exercised about homemade grenades that had been found along with the rifles. He wanted to know more about them because they were discovered to be more powerful than the ones the British army used. The accused said they knew nothing about the grenades. They had no idea how they had gotten there. The kibbutz was unguarded, a place of peace. Anyone could have placed them. Possibly they had been planted by the Palestine Police, which, as everyone knew, was riddled with Nazis. This last theory was not far-fetched. I had read in the British press of members of Oswald Mosley's Fascist Party enrolling in the Palestine Police to avoid conscription in the British army. Others with similar sympathies had come from Ireland, where they had belonged to the hated Black and Tans, the constabulary set up to hunt down Irish revolutionaries. The Jews regarded them with fear and scorn. Later, I was told about the unsurprising verdict: guilty, with long prison terms.

I looked up another soldier-writer named Irwin Shaw I had met briefly in New York and whom I found was living for the moment in Tel Aviv. I liked Tel Aviv, although not as much as Jerusalem. In its

shabby modernity, it reminded me of Miami Beach. There were no high buildings, no sense of history. Everything seemed a bit makeshift. But there was the beach and an esplanade that ran along the sea, and music still flowed from open windows: no Arab music here; this improvised city was for Jews but you could hear the piano lessons and sometimes a live duet or trio or even a quartet playing Brahms or Beethoven. I wondered about those musicians, in what famed European orchestra they might have played. From which occupied country had they escaped, bringing their indispensable music with them? Who had been left behind?

Irwin received me graciously. He was a large, generous, crewcut athlete from Brooklyn who had achieved success as a short-story writer principally for *The New Yorker*. In the Army, he had been part of a film unit headed by the director George Stevens. When they got to Cairo, Irwin had dropped out of the unit with murky permission and gone to Palestine to write a play. He was staying at the home of a refugee woman from Berlin, and she rented me an extra room. She would walk around the apartment with a sad distracted air as though she were looking for something she had lost. She had no need to say what it was. In the morning, she would bring us a breakfast of fruit and cheese and different kinds of olives and warm flat bread, and afterward Irwin and I would each sit down at opposite ends of the room, backs to one another, and write whatever we had to write. Irwin was a creature of appetites, and writing was one of them, along with food and sport and women. He would sit down and almost immediately his typewriter would go off like a machine gun. I sat there, paralyzed. Irwin had no patience for anything like writer's block, and if he did not hear my typewriter clacking away, he would turn and demand to know what was the matter with me. In the afternoons, we would go to the beach or else find a tennis court and rent racquets and play until the sun went down. The war did not exist.

Through *Post* editor Ted, I was invited to visit a kibbutz a few hours from Jerusalem. The visit would be a privilege; they did not ordinarily encourage strangers, but Ted knew I would be welcome because most of them were Americans. He also arranged for a car and driver to take me there and back. The car was an old Citroen, and the driver a burly Romanian refugee named Branco who liked to talk. We communicated in a soupy mixture of Romanian, English and Yiddish. He was particularly happy to speak Yiddish because he said the Zionists berated him for speaking it. They said it was the language of the *shtetl* and the concentration camp, a language of defeat. He should speak Hebrew, the language of the new militant Jew. But Branco considered Hebrew a language without euphony, unlike Romanian. He would demonstrate with sentences first in one language then the other. I thought he made his point. His personal story had an awful banality: just another ordinary Jewish family rounded up and sent for extermination. Branco had escaped by hiding in a manure pile and then scrounged and hid and talked his way to Palestine. He did not know what had happened to his wife and two small sons, but he knew. He was grateful for being safe now, but Branco did not like Palestine. He did not think of it as his homeland and felt no connection to Zionism. They were not his kind of Jews. I had met others like him, refugees who clung to their own language while wanting only to return to their former country. Branco could not wait for the war to end so that he could leave and become a European again. He did not think he would return to Romania. He believed in the diaspora; if Jews scattered around the world, it would be harder to find and kill them.

We set off in the early morning before the heat closed in. For most of the way, our road ran through a pitiless desert, on either side nothing but the sun beating down on scrub and rock, but every so often the desert would suddenly burst into colorful groves of lemons and oranges. Branco explained that these belonged to different collective farms. I marveled at the struggle it had taken to wrest this fruit from this unforgiving earth and felt a modest pride that Jews had done this. It was the same pride I had felt about the homemade grenades. We were not only people of the book or the counting house. We drove through small Arab villages, where brown-skinned children stopped their play to watch us pass and Branco would take candy from his pocket and throw it at them. I watched them scramble after the pieces. Behind them were women sitting in doorways, holding infants in their arms. Behind them were men watching us silently as we sped past.

The kibbutz was set on top of a hill, more for defensive purposes than the fertility of the land. This was brown and scrubby, but fruit trees dotted the slopes and there were garden plots between unpainted wooden houses. We parked in front of the largest one. A young man came out. Shorts, open shirt, a long, unsmiling face browned from the sun. He greeted us formally in Midwestern English. His name was Amos; he had been assigned as our guide; just tell him what we wanted to see. Branco decided to stay with the car. Amos took me for a walk around the premises. He pointed out the pears and plums they were growing, the plots of tomatoes. He was not unfriendly, but neither was he welcoming. He answered my questions from a polite distance. He came from Cleveland, he had two children, but another was on the way. Everyone here had children, there was no limit,

having them was encouraged although they were not Orthodox. The kibbutz was new, but growing. More recruits were coming from America all the time. They expected a flood when the war was over. They had bought some of their land from local Arabs, the rest they had simply occupied. No one had been living on it. They had no idea who owned it. Whoever did, he had done nothing with it. The land belonged to whomever could make it grow. We could see what it had been before the kibbutz had gotten hold of it, see what they had wrought. It was only the beginning. It was their land by right of occupation; they would not give it up, no matter who claimed it. He had no interest in me, where I came from, whom I might be. I was getting the tour.

Afterward, we had lunch in a communal dining room, seated at a long table together with a dozen or so young men and women who looked and dressed like Amos. They all seemed very healthy. Amos explained that the children ate separately. The meal was homegrown vegetables and sour cream. The talk was mostly in Hebrew sprinkled with English and there was much laughter. No one talked to me. I was ignored. At first I believed this was not happening. It could not be deliberate. I had asked a few questions and gotten no answers; perhaps they were shy or occupied with weightier matters. It was as though I was not there. I finished the meal in silence and, outside, I asked Amos what that was all about, Had I been rude? What had I done to provoke this? "You're not a real Jew," he said. "That's why they weren't talking to you." I thought he was kidding, making the kind of joke that Jews told on themselves. I said that I was as real a Jew as any of them. He shook his head. "You're not here," he said patiently. "If you were a real Jew, you would be here, not back in America." He said this without rancor. A fact, undeniable. They are not my kind of Jews, Branco had said.

I did not stay much longer in Palestine. I did make another broadcast, speechless this time. I was asked to ring the bells at Bethlehem on Christmas Eve, again for an international audience. My helpers were five Arab children between 9 and 12 who looked just like the two who had been my guides for the *Yank* broadcast. They treated me the same as the others had, as a kind of curio who could be examined for amusement. We got along well, and when the red light came on and we pulled the heavy ropes and the bells began their rich plangent sounds, we all of us whooped and hollered, laughing as we pulled, shouting, "Merry Christmas! Merry Christmas!" the boys holding onto the ropes so that they got pulled high up to the ceiling, where I was afraid they would hit their heads. But they had done this before and knew how close to come. Afterward, we shook hands all around and I gave them the candy and gum I had brought. They said I should come back and visit again. I said I would certainly try. We all agreed Palestine was a beautiful country. The 12-year-old said it would be even better without the Jews. I watched them for a moment, smiling and nodding, and then I said I was a Jew. They shook their heads. I couldn't be, I was an American. They liked Americans.

I went to say goodbye to Ted and his family. A friend was there whom I had met before: Gershon Agronsky, the publisher of *The Palestine Post*. Middle-aged, attractive, sophisticated, he had fought with the British in WWI and had gone on to found this English-language newspaper. I enjoyed listening to him; he had a keen, liberal outlook. He came with me when I left and we drove down to Tel Aviv. He suggested a walk along the esplanade before we parted. The sun was going down and the sea was flat, and it seemed fitting to take leave in such a calm and pleasant way. Agronsky talked about the war and Palestine and what a democratic Jewish state would look like when it was formed, as it would surely be whenever the big war was over. There would be sacrifices, of course. You could not form a nation without them. He pointed to Jaffa, a headland jutting out in the water, inhabited almost exclusively by Arabs. "They will have to go," he said. I was not sure I heard him right. I said they had lived there for hundreds of years. He knew that. He sympathized. Still, they would have to go. We walked on, talking about this and that.

I flew to Cairo with Irwin and we found a place to live and ate the famous ice cream at Groppi's and played tennis at the Gezira Sporting Club with little Arab boys to pick up our balls if they strayed off the court. But soon it was time to do what I should have been doing, and I hitched a ride on a B-24 back to Italy and found an infantry unit battling its bloody way up the coast and fed myself back into the war. But for a long time I could not get that pleasant liberal voice out of my head. They will have to go. It did not matter how long they had lived there, what they owned, whom they had buried there. Nations are built on dispossession. They would have to go. And, of course, they went.

Walter Bernstein wrote the screenplays for The Molly Maguires, Fail-Safe, Semi-Tough*, and* Yanks*. His script for* The Front*, starring Woody Allen, received an Oscar nomination. A longtime writer for* The New Yorker*, he is the author of the collection of World War II stories*

Tablet

Are Jews Indigenous to the Land of Israel?

Yes.

By Ryan Bellerose

As an indigenous activist—I am a Métis from the Paddle Prairie Metis settlement in Alberta, Canada—there is one question I am most often asked by the public, one that can instantly divide a community due to its intense and arduous subject matter.

Yet, regardless of the scenario, each time I hear the words, "Are Jews the indigenous people of Israel?" I'm inclined to answer not only with my heart but with the brutal, honest truth, backed by indisputable, thousands-year-old historical and archaeological fact: yes.

While evidence in favor of this view is overwhelming, activists who oppose Israel's right to exist and deny the Jewish people's connection to the land—perhaps before learning where indigenous status stems from and what it means—still have an issue with this claim, supporting a narrative built on falsehoods that today is basically acknowledged as fact.

It is my belief that strengthening Jewish identity is the optimum way to fight against the perpetuation of false narratives and lies. This can be achieved only through an indigenous decolonization of Jewish identity, which would urge Jews to see themselves through a Jewish lens and manifest the indigenous aspects of Jewish identity in a meaningful way.

Now, to understand indigeneity, one must also understand indigenous people, how we see ourselves, and how we see the world. At its simplest, indigenous status stems from the genesis of a culture, language, and traditions in conjunction with its connections to an ancestral land, most commonly derived from ties to pre-colonial peoples. Once a people have such a cultural, linguistic, and spiritual genesis as well as a coalescence as a people, they are generally acknowledged as an indigenous people.

An anthropologist named José Martínez Cobo, who served as the UN's special rapporteur on discrimination against indigenous populations, developed a simple checklist in order to make indigenous status easier to understand. Even though that checklist has since been adjusted—I would argue, to fit the UN's anti-Israel agenda—it remains the standard for most anthropologists in the field today:

Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories, or parts of them. They form at present nondominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal system.

This historical continuity may consist of the continuation, for an extended period reaching into the present of one or more of the following factors:

a) Occupation of ancestral lands, or at least of part of them;

b) Common ancestry with the original occupants of these lands;

c) Culture in general, or in specific manifestations (such as religion, living under a tribal system, membership of an indigenous community, dress, means of livelihood, lifestyle, etc.);

d) Language (whether used as the only language, as mother-tongue, as the habitual means of communication at home or in the family, or as the main, preferred, habitual, general or normal language);

e) Residence on certain parts of the country, or in certain regions of the world;

f) Other relevant factors.

As a guideline, the Martínez Cobo study is fairly clear and gives us a way to avoid falling prey to false claims. However, there is one section—which, as far as I can tell, wasn't in Cobo's earliest definition—that has been referred to as problematic by many indigenous activists. This section refers to "nondominant sectors of society," which is directly related to the issue of Jews as an indigenous people. It implies that by being "nondominant," you have yet to realize self-determination. Ergo, if a group has achieved self-determination (i.e., the Jewish people or the Fijians), they will no longer meet the checklist as indigenous.

Seeing how the goal of all indigenous peoples is to achieve self-determination on their ancestral lands, it's basically the most egregious example of a Catch-22.

You might be wondering why this seemingly throwaway line about "prevailing societies and non-dominant sectors" was included when it's so clearly counterintuitive to our goals as indigenous peoples. It

is my belief that it was inserted to deny indigenous status to one specific people, in fact, the only people who have actually achieved full self-determination on their ancestral lands: the Jewish people.

Why else would the United Nations include a caveat that basically denies indigenous peoples' identity if we actually win in our struggle?

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Archaeology, genealogy, and history all support the Jewish claim to indigeneity. A debate on this issue only even exists because we've been fed a false narrative that Palestinian Arabs also hold a claim to the land of Israel. Not to say that two peoples can't be indigenous to one land. The Palestinians do indeed have the legitimate "rights of longstanding presence" in Israel, but this does not trump the indigenous status of Jewish people, 90 percent of whom can directly trace their genetics to the Levant. The cultural genesis, spirituality, language, and ancestral ties of Palestinian Arabs, however, trace back to the Hejaz (a region in present-day Saudi Arabia). In the Quran, the Hejaz is where Muhammad was born and where he established a community of followers.

To say that Palestinian Arabs were the first inhabitants of the land of Israel is problematic for actual indigenous people like the Jewish people, the Amazigh, the Copts, the Assyrians, the Samaritans, and others who were forcefully conquered, subsumed, and converted. It would literally be akin to white Europeans in North America making that same claim. Conquering peoples can still become indigenous through cultural genesis and coalescence. They cannot, however, become indigenous simply through conquering indigenous people.

Indigenous status is specific to certain areas, just as in North America, where certain tribes are indigenous to specific regions. The same rules should be applied in the Middle East. Just as the Cree would not claim Mohawk territories, Arabs should not try to claim Jewish, Amazigh, Kurdish, or Assyrian territories. Each of those peoples have clearly defined territories that date to pre-colonial times.

The primary argument promoting the false narrative that Jews are not indigenous to the land of Israel is that they are actually the descendants of European coAfrica and the surrounding region. You may also want to ask: What spiritual, cultural, or traditional constructs of the Canaanite people have Palestinian Arabs maintained? The answer is none.

But this should not be surprising. Even the most novice researcher looking into falsehoods perpetrated by Palestinian leaders would quilonizers. This can be easily rebuked. Recent studies support the notion that some 80 percent of Jewish males, and 50 percent of Jewish females, can trace their ancestry to the Middle East. Early population genetics studies also confirm that "most Jewish Diaspora groups originated in the Middle East."

Another study shows that even the first European Ashkenazi Jews were at least half Middle Eastern.

The next argument against Jews being an indigenous people derives from the fact that Abraham was from Ur. And, while he is considered the father of the Jewish people, they did not become a people in Ur but in the Levant—specifically, in modern-day Judea and Samaria.

According to Jewish tradition and spirituality, the Torah was given to the Jewish people at Mount Sinai, but they had their cultural Genesis in the land of Israel. Of the 613 mitzvot, the vast majority can only be completed in the land of Israel. The Patriarchs and Matriarchs of the Jewish people are all buried in the land of Israel. The holiest sites in Judaism are located—you guessed it—in the land of Israel. Abraham was indeed from Ur, but the people who stemmed from him are, without a doubt, from Israel.

This is closely related to the issue of Jerusalem, which both Palestinian Muslims and Israeli Jews claim as their own. One need only look to the Tanakh, where Jerusalem is mentioned an astounding 699 times, and then to the Quran, where Jerusalem is not mentioned even once, to resolve this dispute.

Then there is the Canaanite argument, a relatively newer piece of Palestinian propaganda that argues—because the Torah claims that the Canaanites were driven out by the Israelites—that Jews are therefore not indigenous to Israel. Archaeologists suggest, however, that the Canaanites were in fact not destroyed at all, but subsumed by the ascendant Hebrew people.

It appears that once Palestinian Arabs realized their claim to being descendants of the Philistines was false—as the Philistines, derived from the Hebrew word *peleshet*, have no connection ethnically, linguistically, or historically to the people of Arabia—they decided that they were descended from Canaanites instead.

In a 2012 speech, a spokesperson for Mahmoud Abbas said, "The nation of Palestine upon the land of Canaan had a 7,000-year history B.C.E. This is the truth, which must be understood, and we have to note it, in order to say: 'Netanyahu, you are incidental in history. We are the people of history. We are the owners of history.' "

This comment from the Abbas camp is complete rubbish, just one on a laundry list of Palestinian misnomers. First, the Canaanites have been extinct for

3,000 years and little is known today about their direct descendants. Second, pre-Islamic Arabs—of whom Palestinians are direct descendants—first appeared only in the 9th century BCE, not in 7000 BCE. Third, in 1946, before the establishment of Modern Israel, Palestinian-Arab leaders themselves only claimed a connection to the land of Israel dating back no further than seventh century CE—when Muhammad's followers conquered North

ckly find other blatant lies aimed at delegitimizing the history of the Jewish people, like the time Yasser Arafat told Bill Clinton there was never a Jewish temple in Jerusalem, or the time Ekrima Sabri, former Jerusalem mufti and chairman of the Supreme Islamic Council in Jerusalem, said, "After 25 years of digging, archaeologists are unanimous that not a single stone has been found related to Jerusalem's alleged Jewish history."

These are the proponents of the false narrative attempting to rebuke the indigenous status of the Jewish people in the land of Israel.

I got involved in this struggle because I was seeing nonindigenous people make arguments that are detrimental to actual indigenous people, arguments that attempt to rewrite our history. The idea that "Palestinian Arab" conquerors could become indigenous through conquering the Jewish people, even though the term "Palestinian" was only used in reference to Jews before 1948, is anathema. While Arabs claim to be related to the descendants of Israel through blood, it's just another way to say that they acted like all conquerors, raping and pillaging and then settling and subsuming the locals. Native North Americans especially understand that simply conquering indigenous people does not grant one indigenous status.

Building a monument over our sacred places does not make them yours (Mount Rushmore, anyone?) Not any more than UNESCO declaring the Temple Mount to be a Muslim sacred site because they built a mosque over the church that was built over the ruins of the Jewish Temple. It's a basic tradition in the Western ethos to respect those who came before you; it's even built into most of our laws to respect prior claim, and that's what indigenous rights are really all about. Respecting the rights of those who came before you.

Ryan Bellerose is the Advocacy Coordinator for Western Canada of B'nai Brith Canada's League for Human Rights.

Tablet

Sabbatai Sevi's Conversion to Islam

A 17th-century 'holy apostasy': like Christ's crucifixion, the fulfillment of a messianic prophecy?

By Cengiz Sisman

On Sept. 17, 1666, Sabbatai Sevi (1626-1676), the founder of one of the most influential messianic movements in Jewish and world history, converted to Islam. An apostate messiah was a greater paradox for believers than that of a crucified messiah. Only a small group of dedicated believers overcame this cognitive dissonance and established a crypto-messianic sect, better known as the Sabbateans or Dönmes, which sustained their enigmatic identity throughout the centuries and left a deep imprint not only in Judaism but also in Islam, via the Dönmes in the Ottoman Empire, and among Christians, via the Frankists in Poland and Eastern European countries. To some observers, the Sabbatean movement and Sabbateans were the forerunners of Zionism and hence Jewish nationalism; to some others, they were the actors behind Jewish and Turkish modernity and secularism; yet to some others, they were the founder of a new form of Islamic Sufism and Jewish Kabbala.

While his followers were expecting the inauguration of the messianic age during the heyday of the movement, the messiah was arrested and brought in chains by the Ottoman authorities to the Edirne palace with the charge of sedition on Sept. 14, 1666. Visiting Edirne in those days, a French priest, Robert de Dreux, relates that he saw several Jews parading on the streets. Some of them were carrying shovels, spades, and other tools. When he asked them what those tools were for, they replied that they were going to fix the roads on which the messiah was going to walk.

On Sept. 17, 1666, a trial was held before the Sultan Mehmed IV to settle Sabbatai Sevi's fate. Very rich and colorful narratives about this scene, mostly based on rumor, made their way into the sources, especially those of foreign observers. For example, Paul Rycaut, a British ambassador in the empire narrates that "the Grand Signor would not be put off without a miracle, and it must be one of his own choosing; which was that Sabbatai would be stripped naked, and set as a mark to his dexterous Archers; if the arrows passed not his body, but that his flesh and

skin was proof, like Armour, then he would believe him to be the Messiah." Contemporary Dönme tradition maintains that, during the trial, Sevi's religious knowledge was challenged by such questions as "What is the nature of soul?" "Did Muhammad ascend to heaven in body or in soul?" and "What did Moses tell Muhammad during his ascension?" As Sevi answered these questions with textual evidence from Jewish and Islamic traditions, Muslim scholars in the meetings admonished him, saying, "You know all of these and yet you are still not a Muslim?"

Sevi surely had a hard time explaining himself in every sense. He knew some Turkish, but he was not fluent enough in that language to pursue a legal/religious argument during the trial. One of the palace physicians, Hayatizade Mustafa Efendi, a Jewish convert known as Moshe ben Abravanel, helped him to make his case. Similar to other sedition and heresy cases, the authorities were ready to punish with death. However, with the involvement of the sultan, who was fond of converting non-Muslims to Islam, the Jewish messianic figure was given another option: conversion.

Coming from a Sephardic background, steeped in the rabbinic tradition, and familiar with the Marrano experience, Sevi was no doubt well aware of the Jewish attitude to apostasy and martyrdom. When he had to choose between martyrdom and conversion, he chose life, for this act could be justified by the Sephardic tradition since the time of Maimonides. However, when some of the Dönmes wanted to return to Judaism in later centuries, the rabbis did not show the same positive attitude toward them, for, unlike the Marranos, they had in the meantime adopted several antinomian practices.

The conversion of the messiah was shocking to the majority of believers, who felt betrayed and returned to their previous lives with a feeling of profound disappointment and despair. His believers nevertheless strove hard to explain the paradox. Once the dust settled around the messiah's conversion, a few of his believers began to reinterpret his conversion as a sort of "holy apostasy," a "secret mission," deliberately undertaken with a particular mystical purpose in mind. According to them, even though the majority of Jews at the time believed that Sevi's conversion to Islam was a cowardly act of betrayal that almost annihilated Judaism, they interpreted it rather as a necessary step in the messiah's redemption of the world. The whole point of the Holy Apostasy was *tiqqun*, not conversion. In this sense, this "holy apostasy," like Christ's crucifixion, was seen as the fulfillment of a messianic prophecy.

The doctrine that argues that the redeemer has actually fulfilled his messianic mission by abandoning his or her faith was essentially nihilistic and anti-heroic. Yet for other believers, Sevi's conversion to Islam was undertaken in order to forestall a wrathful action by the sultan, who in his fury wished to destroy Ottoman Jewry in its entirety. This rumor, however, seems to have been fabricated by the Sabbatean believers who were desperately looking for an explanation for their Messiah's conversion. The claim that the sultan ordered all Jews to be killed would be entirely contradictory to any known Ottoman practice. Jews were often persecuted and even forced to convert in the neighboring Safavid Empire in the mid-17th century, but this communal threat had no effect on the Jews of the Ottoman Empire.

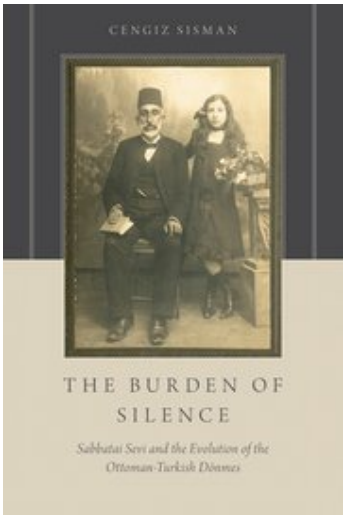
It is for sure, however, that the Jewish authorities were quite relieved with the ending of the messianic commotion as reflected in Istanbul rabbis' letter to the Izmir Jews: "And bless the King Sultan Mehmed, because in his days a great redemption was brought in Israel. And be not adverse to the kingdom, may God prevent it, especially all has happened."

Almost all travelers, missionaries, and non-Ottoman Jews, however, were of the opinion that Sabbatai Sevi and the Sabbateans converted to Islam under duress, while secretly remaining loyal to their previous faith. A Dönme tradition buttresses this position, saying that when he was asked to embrace Islam on pain of death, he whispered to himself: "I convert as long as this soul (*can*) stays with me." As soon as he went out from the presence of the sultan, he freed the bird hidden under his garment, and said: "Now the soul is released from the body." Even today, this story is circulated among the Dönme believers. However, no existing Ottoman source written before the second half of the 19th century casts doubt on the authenticity of Sabbatai and his followers' conversion, as conversion to Islam was a widespread phenomenon in the Ottoman Empire from its inception.

After the conversion, Sabbatai Sevi's worldly and spiritual merit was acknowledged by the Ottomans. He was granted a prestigious name, Aziz Mehmed Efendi after his conversion. He was clothed in robes of honor and furs and presented with a few purses of silver; he was also granted the honorary position of a gatekeeper, *kapıcıbaşı*, with a royal pension of 150 aspers per day. According to a Dönme tradition, several more believers named "İbrahim, Murat, Suleiman, Mahmut, and Yusuf" followed closely in his footsteps. Their wives took the names Zehra, Ayşe, and Melike. Sabbatai Sevi's wife Sarah came to Edirne a week after the conversion episode and converted to Islam with the name of Fatima. We are not so sure how many believers followed in the

footsteps of the messiah after the conversion event. Until Sabbatai resumed his missionary activity among his former believers two to three years later, the number of Sabbatean converts appears to have remained small.

Exhausted after an arduous conversion experience, Sabbatai Sevi found himself partaking in a new social and religious world. He lived another 10 years that were full of ambiguities and complexities stemming from his new identity as Aziz Mehmet Efendi, which began at the Edirne palace in 1666 and ended in Albania in 1676 as Sabbatai Mehmet Sevi. Interpretations around the conversion and his new identity were fashioned and refashioned during those years, by both himself and his believers. The dialectic between his self-perception and the perceptions of his believers, his opponents, and the Ottoman authorities caused his identity to oscillate between and across the traditional boundaries of Judaism and Islam, leading to the emergence of a crypto-messianic sect that came to be known as the Dönmes, who survived until the present day.



Cengiz Sisman teaches at the University of Houston-Clear Lake. He is the author of The Burden of Silence: Sabbatai Sevi and the Evolution of the Ottoman-Turkish Donmes.

Tablet

Christopher Columbus, Secret Jew

What is the evidence that Columbus was a Jew?

By Barbara Penn

On February 15, 1493, Christopher Columbus sent out a letter to the European world revealing for the first time his discovery of America. His finding was the first step into a new world, which would become the symbol of religious tolerance and freedom. The real identity of Christopher Columbus sheds new light on the poignancy of this historical period, especially for the Jews.

Christopher Columbus

To gain a better understanding of Columbus's legacy, it's important to note the historical background of his life. Columbus lived during the time of the Inquisition during which Anusim, Jews who practiced their faith in secret, were under constant threat of arrest and tortuous death. Tens of thousands of secret Jews were tortured during the Spanish Inquisition, many dying a martyr's death.

Columbus' identity has been shrouded in mystery and debated for some time. The Italians claimed that Columbus was born in Lugano, Italy to Domenico Colombo, a tower sentinel. The Spaniards claim that he was born on Spanish soil to a father with a different name and trade. Recently, as reported by Charles Garcia of CNN, Spanish scholars Jose Erugo, Otero Sanchez and Nicholas Dias Perez have concluded that Columbus was, in fact, a secret Jew whose voyage to the Indies had another altogether different objective than he claimed.

The content of Columbus' personal letters and diary entries prove most revealing. One telling difference between Columbus' personal writings and those of his contemporaries was the language it was written in,

namely one unrecognizable to most native Spaniards. Linguistics professor Estelle Irizarry, after analyzing the language of hundreds of similar letters concluded that it was written in Castilan Spanish or Ladino, a Jewish version of the Spanish language, analogous to what the Yiddish language is to German.

Another revelation is in the mysterious monogram found on his the letters, written right to left. To quote Semitic linguist Maurice David, who discovered the meaning of the symbols, “On all of these... intimate letters the attentive reader can plainly see at the left top corner a little monogram which is... in fact, nothing more…. than an old Hebrew greeting…. frequently used among religious Jews all over the world even to this day”. The symbol he was referring to were the Hebrew letters *bet* and *heh*, which we know to stand for *b'ezrat Hashem*, or with God's help. Not surprisingly, Columbus' letter to the King and Queen was the only one of his 13 letters studied that did not contain this symbol.

Three of the wishes in Columbus' will and testament also lend a number of telling clues to his identity. One request in his will was that one-tenth of his income be given as charity to provide dowry for poor girls, a commonly practiced Jewish custom that stretches far back. He also requested to have money given to a certain Jew who lived near the Jewish quarter of Lisbon.

Another particularly telltale note in his will seemed to be somewhat of a hidden signature, a triangular form of dots and letters that resembled inscriptions found on gravestones of Jewish cemeteries in Spain. Columbus even instructed his children to maintain this mysterious symbol for perpetuity. The hidden signature, when translated, was actually a prayer in lieu of the standard Hebrew kaddish, which was forbidden in Spain. This ploy allowed Columbus to covertly instruct his children to recite the kaddish prayer for him.

Simon Wiesenthal suggests that the motive behind Columbus' voyage was to find a safe haven for the Jews.

People assume that King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella financed Columbus' journey. But according to Charles Garcia of CNN, two conversos, Louis De Santangel and Gabriel Sanchez, along with the prominent Rabbi Isaac Abravanel (Abarbanel), took money out of their own pockets to pay for the voyage. This historical fact should raise yet another question: Why did these Jews take interest in Columbus' voyage?

Simon Wiesenthal suggests in his book, *Sails of Hope,* that the motive behind Columbus' voyage was to find a safe haven for the Jews. Similarly, others conclude that Columbus set sail to Asia for the purpose to obtaining enough gold to finance a crusade in an effort to take back Jerusalem and rebuild the Jews' holy Temple. According to Dr. Gerhard Falk, author of a *Man’s Ascent to Reason*, he brought a Hebrew interpreter with him, with the hope of locating the ten lost tribes. (Hence, the popular lyric reads: “In 1492, Colombus sailed the ocean blue. His interpreter was lou, he was a Jew and that is true.")

The day of Columbus' travels are also of noteworthy significance. It is said that he had originally planned on sailing on Tisha b'Av, but postponed his travels because the day is considered inauspicious for such ventures. Instead he began his journey on August 3rd, the 11th of Av, two days after the Jews were given the choice to convert or leave Spain. For our discerning readers, is this a fact of mere coincidence or of remarkable significance?

On the surface it seems that an ordinary sailor set forth to find a different path to the Indies, and by a remarkable stroke of luck, landed in a land known for its benevolence and religious tolerance. However, upon exploring the true identity of Christopher Columbus, we come to know a man, who, in his quest to free the Jewish people from their oppression, was brought to America by the hand of Divine Providence.

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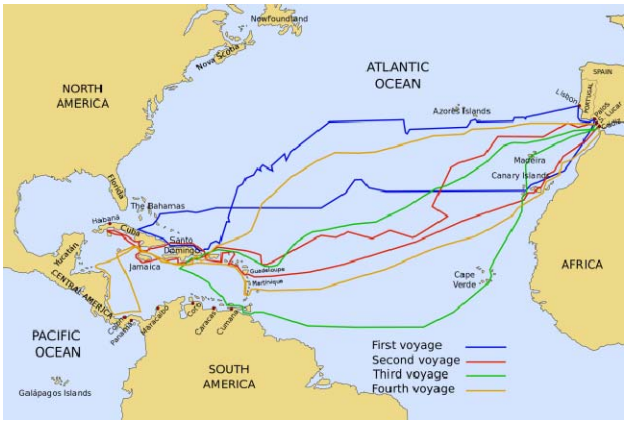


Voyages of Columbus (Wikipedia)

Reflections on Death

Mourning and the Afterlife in the Jewish Tradition

By Edward Alexander

After One-Hundred-and-Twenty: Reflections on Death, Mourning, and the Afterlife in the Jewish Tradition, by Hillel Halkin; Princeton University Press, 2016; 232 pp.

Is there any subject more compelling yet more repellent than the afterlife? Hillel Halkin's book, *After One-Hundred-and-Twenty: Reflections on Death, Mourning, and the Afterlife in the Jewish Tradition,* is at once scholarly and passionate, secular and religious, detached and autobiographical. It has forever more made it difficult for us to offer the traditional Jewish birthday greeting derived from Moses' life span ("*Ad meah ve'esrim*" in Hebrew, "*Biz hundert un tsvantsig*" in Yiddish) without also thinking: "After 120." Following that somber thought will be this syllogism: "I am a man; all men are mortal; therefore I must die." As Shakespeare put the matter in *Cymbeline*: "Golden lads and girls all must/As chimney sweepers, come to dust." As Halkin says in his introduction, "We're in this together."

Halkin, who has spent most of his adult life in the Israeli town of Zikhron Ya'akov, is America's greatest contribution to Israeli literature. His *Letters to an American Jewish Friend* — which challenged American Jews with the question, "Why don't you really come home?" — remains, forty years after publication, the most powerful Zionist polemic ever written. He has translated Sholom Aleichem into English, written a scintillating study of Yehuda Halevi, a verse autobiography of Shmuel HaNagid and a prize-winning biography of Vladimir Jabotinsky. His many translations from Hebrew into English are so good that a prominent Israeli novelist told me he had stopped using Halkin as a translator because, "I had the feeling he was in competition with me," i.e., making the novelist sound more eloquent than he wished to sound. Halkin is also a formidable philologist and — or, so I am convinced — was the writer of the pseudonymous "Philologos" column that ran in the *Forward* for 24 years.

Imaginative representations of the next world ("*HaOlam HaBa*" in Hebrew) suffer from a fatal flaw: They purport to describe "that undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveler returns." World literature has been enriched by the forays of Homer, Vergil, Dante and Milton into the world which we would inhabit much longer than our sojourn on earth, perhaps for eternity. Halkin has now given us a rich sampling of the vast Jewish literature on death and the afterlife. (He has been lucky in his editors: his *Letters* book was suggested to him by the late Maier Deshell, then editor of the Jewish Publication Society, and this one by Neal Kozodoy, editor of the Tikvah Fund's Library of Jewish Ideas.)

Since most readers of this review, like the reviewer himself, have attended colleges where we studied mainly the mind of Western Christendom rather than the literature of the Jews, we have been more conversant with non-Jewish conceptions of the afterlife than with Jewish ones. In Dante's *Inferno,* for example, the most dehumanized and disgusting figure is Ciacco, the glutton. But for Jews, eating — although strictly regulated by laws that set them apart from lawless and oppressive gentile communities in which they lived — is anything but a potentially sinful activity. "When the Moshiach comes, we will have a banquet," sing the Hassidim. Jewish imaginings of the afterlife do resemble Christian ones in recognizing that one cannot have a heaven without a hell; but the Jewish version of hell is much less a place of mud, frost, fire and filth than the Christian one; and "nowhere in early rabbinic sources do we find such glee taken in hell's sufferings" as the Christians (sadistically) imagined for heretics. Nevertheless, the current bumper crop of Jewish haters and defamers of beleaguered Israel would do well to recall Maimonides' dictum: "One who separates himself from the community, even if he does not commit a transgression but only holds aloof from the congregation of Israel..shows himself indifferent when they are in distress…goes his own way, as if he were one of the gentiles and did not belong to the Jewish people — such a person has no share in the world to come."

The way in which Halkin's history of ideas can suddenly become personal is exemplified in his treatment of the Hebrew Bible's reverence for the bones (not flesh) of the dead, as in burial caves where one is "gathered to one's fathers"; or in the belief, which took hold of the Jewish imagination, that the dead would travel to Jerusalem by tunnel on Judgment Day; or in Ezekiel's vision of dry bones — "My bones," as Halkin writes, "beside my ancestors, my children's bones besides mine, I would have formed part of a never-ending chain."

The personalization appears quite differently in Halkin's treatment of the Hebrew Bible's relentless emphasis upon the lifelong hunger of childlessness, in the stories of Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and the parents of Samuel and Samson. Hannah, in fact, actually invents silent prayer in order to plead for a (male) child, who turns out to be Samuel. (The custom of referring to one's firstborn son [as my father did] as "a kaddish" expresses the belief that the living can influence the fate of the dead. But in this matter

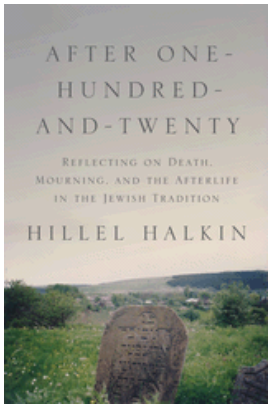
Halkin demurs: he has chosen not to recite kaddish for his own parents, whom he loved, after the shiva period is over. If, as he clearly believes, his mother and father– his now extinguished Sun and Moon — really were virtuous, what need of the kaddish to protect them in the life beyond life?

The great literary gift bestowed on us by this stunning book is Halkin's translation of large sections of Shmuel Hanagid's 64-poem "unparalleled document of mourning" (for his older brother, who died in 1041). In the gradualness of its movement from grief and thanatophobia to consolation and acceptance of death as a part of life, this great elegy by Hanagid ("the emperor") may call to mind Tennyson's masterpiece, *In Memoriam*. That poem comprises 131 sections, written over a 16-year period prior to its publication in 1850. What we shall not find in Tennyson is Hanagid's structure, which follows the Jewish calendar of mourning: death, funeral, first week, first month and the following eleven months. That structure, Halkin suggests, "reflects the natural workings of the human heart."

In conclusion, we should recall that the practice of reciting the mourner's kaddish began in the years just after the Crusades, when a superabundance of mourners led to the tradition of linking personal grief with the collective grief of the Jewish people. Halkin is an Israeli as well as a Jew; and for him Israel's constant burden of peril is epitomized by "the literature of a Jewish state that by now has sent four successive generations of its youth into battle, often to die or be maimed." This modern version of the *akedah* (binding) tears at the heart, but (like the original one of Isaac by Abraham) it has a redeeming purpose. As Halkin wrote in 2007: "In the 1930s the Jews were a people that had lost a first temple and a second one; yet as frightful as their next set of losses was to be, they did not have a third temple to risk. Today they do. And in Jewish history, three strikes and you're out."

Edward Alexander's most recent book is Jews Against Themselves (Transaction Publishers).

The Algemeiner



'We don't need this America,' deputy minister says after UN vote, Kerry speech

Former ambassador to US Michael Oren: Obama Administration's current attitude to Israel 'sad, tragic and dangerous'

By Raphael Ahren

Deputy Minister Michael Oren slammed US Secretary of State John Kerry's address on the peace process as historically inaccurate, offensive and dangerous, and called for a total reset of US-Israel ties.

Oren, a former Israeli ambassador to Washington, also said that the outgoing administration's critical view of the Israeli government, which culminated in the American abstention on Security Council resolution condemning the settlements, was preordained by President Barack Obama's insistently unwavering ideological disposition.

"Kerry's speech was very disturbing for so many reasons," Oren told The Times of Israel. "It is disturbing that this is the point to which US foreign policy has fallen. It's sad, tragic and dangerous. We don't need this relationship. We don't need *this* America."

He elaborated: "The US-Israel relationship is vital for us, for the region and I believe for the world, but we need an America whose strength and commitment to its allies is unquestioned."

US Secretary of State John Kerry lays out his vision for peace between Israel and the Palestinians December 28, 2016, in the Dean Acheson Auditorium at the Department of State in Washington, DC. During his speech, held in Washington, the secretary of state drew a distinction between American and Israeli values and cast doubt to Israel's commitment to democracy, Oren charged. "But he did not raise the question of why those values doesn't lead the US to do something to save hundreds of thousands of lives in our region."

In his lengthy address, Kerry insisted that the Obama administration "cannot be true to our own values — or even the stated democratic values of Israel — and we cannot properly defend and protect Israel, if we allow a viable two-state solution to be destroyed before our own eyes."

Oren, a member of the centrist Kulanu party who in August was appointed a deputy minister for diplomacy in Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office, took offense not only with the content of Kerry's speech but also with the tone he struck.

"When he talked about Palestinian terror and incitement he spoke with a more or less regulated voice. But when he addressed the settlements? Oh my God, he was impassioned, furious."

Oren said he was also deeply troubled by "the systematic distortion of the historical record" in Kerry's presentation. "In the secretary's records, there is no Second Intifada. There was the Oslo peace agreement, but he never stopped to think why Oslo wasn't implemented."

Kerry also failed to acknowledge Israel's 2005 withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and wide-reaching peace offers extended by Israeli leaders in 2000 and 2006, Oren said. Furthermore, the secretary did not sufficiently address the Palestinians' strategy to shun bilateral talks and to internationalize the conflict instead.

Oren, who served as Israel's ambassador in Washington from 2009 and 2013, said the administration often promised him one thing and then did something else.

"It was one broken promise after the other," he said.

Obama is guided by an ideologically rooted disdain for Israeli settlements, including the settlement blocs and Jerusalem neighborhoods outside the 1967-lines, Oren indicated. No Israeli leader — even a sworn leftist willing to dismantle most settlements — would have been able to change the president's hostile policies vis-a-vis Israel, he postulated.

"It is the most deeply held conviction I have: that with any other (Israeli) leader, from whatever party, the result would have been the same," Oren said. "There's nothing we could have done changing that outcome."

Even if Netanyahu had not accepted an invitation to address the US Congress last year to rail against the Iran nuclear deal Obama was advancing, the administration's ostensible anti-Israel stance could not have been avoided, according to Oren. Netanyahu, he insisted, could thus not be blamed for the bad relations with Washington.

Obama was determined to combat Israel's settlement movement from the moment he stepped into the Oval Office in early 2009, Oren continued. As ambassador in Washington, Oren advised the Israeli government "to roll with the punches" and silently accept the US's criticism about settlement expansions. But ultimately that school of thought failed to produce results, because the president was unwilling to change his mind on any issue regarding Israel.

Since quiet diplomacy failed to achieve anything, Netanyahu is right to publicly confront the president over policies he deems detrimental to Israel's security, Oren argued.

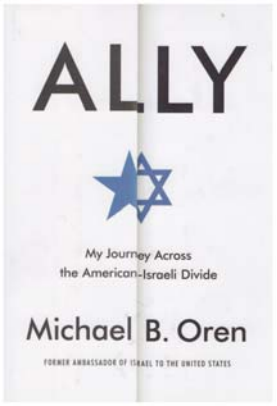
"We were on a collision course to last Friday starting in 2009," Oren said, referring to the anti-settlement UN Security Council passed that day.

It is any president's prerogative to have a worldview different from that of the Israeli government, Oren said, but Obama's strategic decision to put "daylight" between Washington and Jerusalem made it impossible to have an "intimate" relationship, which led to an inevitable series of crises. It was impossible to frankly and productively discuss the Israeli-Palestinian conflict because Obama was utterly unwilling to consider points of view other than his own, Oren charged.

"One hope that I have for the upcoming administration of Donald Trump is that we can enter that discussion, enable that process to move on, to create a horizon," he said. "You can only do that if there's no daylight and if there's intimacy."

Raphael Ahren Raphael Ahren is the diplomatic correspondent at The Times of Israel.

The Times of Israel



World War I and "The World of Yesterday"

By Mladenka Ivanković

The Novel "The World of Yesterday" is Stefan Zweig's[1] autobiography. It represents a valuable historical source for analysis of events before, during and after World War I, seen from the perspective of a contemporary.

This paper will focus on Zweig's memories of the years before and during the Great War.[2]

Stefan Zweig was born in Vienna, on November 28, 1881. He was born into a rich Austrian Jewish family, as the second son of a successful industrialist. Zweig's mother originated from a wealthy family of Jewish bankers. His parents didn't practice religion and it had no major influence on his education. As Zweig pointed out in an interview: "My mother and father were Jewish only through accident of birth". He started writing poems and newspaper articles that were published while he was still in school. Upon graduating from high school, Zweig studied Germanic and Romance languages and literature at the Vienna University. He earned a doctoral degree at age of 23, with a thesis on "The Philosophy of Hippolyte Taine". After that, he successfully wrote poetry and stories, winning one of the most prominent Austrian poetry awards. Verlaine's best songs were translated by Zweig. Beside poetry, he also wrote popular theatrical plays, while novels and long stories dominated his literature work.

Zweig never renounce his membership in the Jewish community. He had a close relationship with Theodor Herzl, the founder of Zionism, whom he met when Herzl was still literary editor of the Vienna's main newspaper Neue Freie Presse. As editor, Herzl published some of Zweig's early essays. Zweig believed in internationalism and in Europeanism, so Herzl's Jewish nationalism couldn't be very attractive to him. Lines in his autobiography "The World of Yesterday" strongly corroborates this.

"The World of Yesterday" is certainly one of the richest and most distinctive memoirs. This novel represents a colorful picture of an era, lasting from the end of 19th century to the outbreak of World War II. Author's exceptional writing talent, Renaissance intellectual and spiritual depth and numerous friendships and contacts with eminent international personalities of public and literature life[3], really justified the name of his novel. Zweig's memoirs truly represent memoirs of a bygone time. They show Austria-Hungary as a peaceful world of moral duties, that would have brought a peaceful resolution to all conflicts, if it had lasted.

In the preface to "The World of Yesterday" Zweig wrote: "I was born in 1881 in a great and mighty empire, in the monarchy of the Habsburgs. But do not look for it on the map; it has been swept away without a trace. I grew up in Vienna, 2000 years old supranational metropolis, and was forced to leave it like a criminal before it was degraded to a German provincial town. My literary work, in the language in which I wrote it, was burnt to ashes in the same land where my books made friends with millions of readers. And so I belong nowhere, and I am a stranger everywhere, a guest at best. Europe, a homeland of my heart's choice, is lost to me, since it has torn itself apart suicidally the second time in a fratricidal war. Never - and I say this without pride, but rather with shame – has any generation experienced such a moral retrogression of mankind; and each of us feels: it is almost too much! My today and each of my yesterdays, my rises and falls, are so diverse that I can sometimes feel as if I had lived not one, but several existences, each one different from the others."[4]

Stefan Zweig's childhood and youth coincided with the golden age of Vienna. He was part of the brilliant Jewish youth. He has been feeling as a citizen of Vienna, but also as a citizen of the world at the same time. Zweig saw the political and social life of Vienna and of the entire Austria-Hungary as a life that has been organized for centuries on the principles of national and social equality. If only that life progressed along the lines set by ethic and established moral and normative laws no conflict between social groups and nations would have arisen. There would be no conflict between workers and the middle classes, and the dramatic conflicts between nations that inhabited the Monarchy. Zweig describes the regulated social life of Vienna, that served as a model of regulation of life in all cities throughout the Monarchy, in the following words: "Vienna, through its centuries-old tradition, was itself a clearly ordered, and – as I once wrote – a wonderfully orchestrated city. The Imperial house still set the tempo. The palace was a center, not only in a spatial sense but also in a cultural sense, of the supranationality of the monarchy. The palaces of the Austrian, the Polish, the Czech and the Hungarian nobility formed as it were a second enclosure around the Imperial palace. Then

[1] https://sr.wikipedia.org/sr/%D0%A8%D1%82%D0%B5%D1%84%D0%B0%D0%BD_%D0%A6%D0%B2%D0%B0%D1%98%D0%B3 accessed 15.01.2017.

[2] The First World War.

[3] Friends of Stefan Zweig were: Sigmund Freud, Bruno Walter, Rainer Maria Rilke, Romain Rolland, Émil Verhaeren and Jules Romains.

[4] Штефан Цвајг, Јучерашњи свет [The World of Yesterday] Нови Сад: Будућност, 1962, p. 8.

came the "good society", consisting of lesser nobility, the higher officials, industry, and the "old families", then the petty bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Each of these social strata lived in its own circle, and even in its own district, the nobility in their palaces in the heart of the city, the diplomats in the third district, industry and the merchants in the vicinity of the Ringsstrasse, the petty bourgeoisie in the inner districts – the second to ninth – and the proletariat in the outer circle. But everyone met in the theatre and at the great festivities such as the Flower Parade in the Prater, where hundred thousand people enthusiastically applauded the "upper ten thousand" in their beautifully decorated carriages."[5]

Zweig pointed out that, considering intellectual life of Vienna, life of both the individual and the community wasn't dominated by military, political or economic questions, but rather by theatrical and cultural events. Importance of culture and theatre in Vienna was so high, as to be barely imaginable in other cities.

Zweig doesn't discuss the role of other national groups in the social and cultural life of Vienna, representing thus the entire monarchy. He simply speaks about the role of his own nation – the Jews: "Adapting themselves to the milieu of the people or country where they live is not only an external protection measure for the Jews, but a deep internal desire. Their longing for a homeland, for rest, for security, for friendliness, urges them to attach themselves passionately to the culture of the world around them. And never was such an attachment more effective – except in the Spain of the 15th century – or happier and more fruitful than in Austria. Having resided for more than two hundred years in the Imperial city, the Jews encountered there easy-going people, inclined to conciliation, under whose apparent laxity of form lay buried the identical deep instinct for cultural and aesthetic values, which was so important to the Jews themselves. And in Vienna they met with more: they found a personal task there. In the last century the pursuit of art in Austria had lost its traditional defenders and protectors, the Imperial house and the aristocracy. […] ...To maintain the Philharmonic on its accustomed level, to enable the painters and sculptors to make a living, it was necessary for the people to jump into the breach, and it was the pride and ambition of the Jewish people to co-operate in the front ranks to carry on the former glory of Viennese culture. […] … Thanks to indolence of the court, the aristocracy, and the Christian millionaires, who preferred maintaining racing stables and hunts to fostering art, Vienna would have remained behind Berlin in the realm of art as Austria remained behind the German Reich in political matters. [...] Nine tenths of what the world celebrated as the Viennese culture in the 19th century was promoted, nourished or even created by Viennese Jewry".[6]

Reflecting on Jewish aspiration toward important political positions in Austria-Hungary, Zweig wrote: "In public life they exerted only a meager influence; the glory of the Imperial house overshadowed every private fortune, the leading positions in the administration of the State were held by inheritance, diplomacy was reserved for the aristocracy, the army and higher officialdom for the old families, and the Jews did not even attempt ambitiously to enter into these privileged circles". [7]

Like his friends of many nations belonging to public and artistic circles, Zweig was a pacifist. They worked for benefit of world peace, peace between all nations and all states.

Based on personal experience from the cinema in Tours, a provincial town in France, Zweig describes the atmosphere that could be felt in the air of European countries just before the outbreak of the Great War. He was in company of friends, and, as usual, cinema played world news before the main movie. Audience, a group of "humble folk, workers, soldiers, market women – the plain people – who chatted comfortably"[8], watched the news from England and France carefree and in joyful manner. However, when the newsreel showing Kaiser Wilhelm's visit to Emperor Francis Josef in Vienna hit the movie screen, a drastic change of atmosphere in the movie theater occurred. The moment Wilhelm II appeared on the screen, "a spontaneous wild whistling and stamping of feet began. […] Everybody booed and whistled, men, women and children, as if they had been personally insulted. The good-natured people of Tours had gone mad at an instant. […] I was frightened to the depths of my heart. […] It had only been a second, but one that showed me how easily people anywhere could be aroused in the time of crisis, despite all attempts at understanding, despite all efforts"[9].

Zweig wanted to believe he was wrong and that the organized world of peace will not be questioned. He spent that summer in a good mood, writing and planning international visits and other life events as if the unpleasant episode never happened.

Since the Emperor Francis Joseph was old, Austro-Hungarian bourgeoisie debated characteristics, politeness and culture of potential heirs to the throne - its favorite and usual topic of discussion. Zweig records a deep, nation-wide sorrow when Emperor's

[5] Ibid., p. 28.

[6] Ibid., pp. 30-32.

[7] Ibid., p. 31.

[8] Ibid., p. 203.

[9] Ibid., p. 204.

only son, the heir to the throne, passed away: "…I can recall another day when Crown Prince Rudolph has been found shot dead in Mayerling. Then the whole city was in a tumult of despair and excitement, tremendous crowd thronged to witness his lying-in-state, the expression of shock and sympathy for the Emperor was overwhelming, that his only son and heir, who had been looked upon as an unusually progressive and humane Habsburg of whom much was expected, had passed away at his prime."[10] General public opinion, like Zweig himself, had the least sympathy for Franz Ferdinand, stating that he "lacked everything that counts for real popularity in Austria; amiability, personal charm and easy-going manner […] He was never seen to smile […] he had no sense for music and no sense of humor, and his wife was equally unfriendly."[11]

Zweig spent the very hours before the outbreak of the Great War in Baden, a spa near Vienna. While in a park, surrounded by many jolly and cheerful guest of the spa, he found out that Franz Ferdinand and his wife had been murdered. Usual atmosphere in the spa was interrupted for a moment by this news, but was soon back to normal, since the archduke wasn't a beloved figure at all. Zweig wrote: "My almost mystic premonition that some misfortune would come from this man with his bulldog neck and his cold, staring eyes, was by no means a personal one but shared by the entire nation; and so the news of his murder aroused no profound sympathy. […] There were many on that day in Austria who secretly sighed with relief that this heir of the aged Emperor had been removed in favor of the much more beloved young archduke Charles."[12]

As Zweig recorded, the Imperial house has initially been struck with the question of Franz Ferdinand wife's burial. It has been decided that countess Chotek, lacking noble origin, was unsuitable for burial in the Imperial vault of the Habsburgs. Thus, it has been decided that the burial should take place in a small Austrian town of Artstetten, supposedly by the choice of the late archduke himself.

From the vantage point of ordinary citizens, nothing suggested that Ferdinand's assassination would be turned into political action against Serbia. No one thought and realized that Monarchywould start the war against a small country, with whom she only had trading conflicts. "Why should we be concerned with these constant skirmishes with Serbia which, as we all knew, originated in some commercial treaties concerned with the export of Serbian pigs?"[13]

Just a few weeks more, the writer and the witness of the epoch said, and the name and the image of Franz Ferdinand will vanish from history forever. He wrote: "My bags were packed so that I could go to Verhaeren in Belgium, my work was in full swing, what did the dead Archduke in his catafalque had to do with my life? The summer was beautiful as never before and promised to become even more beautiful – and we all looked upon the world without care".[14]

However, the will of political factors to transform the existing spheres of influence and change the geographical maps of the world, soon made dramatic turnaround in the lives of ordinary people. Instead of leading an organized and creative life, one was – for some reason – obliged to go to war. For many citizens on the both sides of the border the reasons for war didn't have rational bases. "The Serbian government was accused of collusion in the assassination, and there were veiled hints that Austria would not permit the murder of its supposedly beloved heir-apparent to go unavenged. One could not escape the impression that some kind of action was being prepared in the newspapers, but no one thought of war."[15]

The newspaper campaign increasingly frequently harangued for sanctions against Serbia. The ultimatum has been sent to Serbia, and she didn't fulfill it completely. At that moment the conflict between the Dual Monarchy and Serbia transcended a local conflict. Rumors started to circulate and soon have been transformed into a loud shouts about the necessity of war. Warmongering centers convinced citizens of the Monarchy and of Germany that the treacherous warmongers stood on the other side of the border.

Being a pacifist, Zweig was horrified. However, as an author and analyst, he was impressed by the transformation of ordinary citizen. "The first shock at the news of the war – the war that no one, people or government, had wanted […] had suddenly been transformed into enthusiasm […] young recruits were marching triumphantly, their faces lighting up at a cheering - , they, the John Does and Richard Roes who usually go unnoticed and uncelebrated".[16]

Zweig founds an explanation for this behavior and judgment transformation of an ordinary peaceful and working citizen into a warrior who consciously goes to war in Freud's description of "dissatisfaction and fatigue with culture"[17]. The war was an opportunity to release the animal nature of human beings, to leave

[10] Ibid., p. 209.
[11] Ibid., p. 209.
[12] Ibid., p. 209.
[13] Ibid., p. 211.
[14] Ibid., p. 211.
[15] Ibid., p. 210.
[16] Ibid., p. 215.
[17] Freud: Dictionary of Psychoanalysis. Edited by Nandor Fodor and Frank Gaynor. New York:Philosophical Library, 1950, p.p. 120-121.

the civilized laws and paragraphs and make way for ancient blood instincts to be lived out.

Zweig has not been recruited, because he was declared unfit by several medical commissions and didn't have any military training. Declared medically unfit, he was able both to keep his pacifist believes and to stay clean in front of the Monarchy's laws. Austria-Hungary had very strict punishments for dodging military service. Zweig knew that he still had to do something – with the help of a friend working in the War archives he got a position in a library.[18]

Describing the state of spirit among intellectuals, Zweig wrote: "It soon became impossible to converse reasonably with anybody [...] Comrades...accused me rudely of no longer being an Austrian ... and thought I should be brought to the attention of the authorities"[19]. He retired to a distant suburb and opted for internal escapism while all others were raging and raving. Most writers were writing patriotic works and were celebrating the war. Those who didn't, also existed. Zweig was exchanging letters with Romaine Rolland. He and other pacifist authors, originating from various countries mutually at war with each other, were writing texts of the brotherhood of all men. These text were, after censorship interventions, published in the newspapers. That's how the European spiritual elite was sending message that freedom of speech and space for mutual understanding still existed. Such authors and texts were rare and isolated, but they existed after all.

Testimonies about war events made only a small part of Zweig's autobiography. He usually presents war days through the reflections on his literature work at the time, and through description of correspondence with foreign pacifist writers. However, special focus has been reserved for events he witnessed and participated in, while he was stationed near the very frontline.

Zweig spent most of his war days working in the library of the War Archives. The spring of 1915 brought Zweig to Galicia and Poland, territories which have changed masters several times during the war. He was delegated by the War Archives to find and collect all Russian proclamations in the occupied territories, before they were destroyed and lost. Zweig did the job conscientiously, but also witnessed the deep changes war imposed upon cities, buildings and people.

Zweig was sure that he managed to understand the way of thinking of ordinary soldiers. He saw a group of guarded Russian POWs in Tarnow: "The captives did not display the slightest desire to escape, nor the Austrian militia the slightest inclination to be strict about their duties. […] They exchanged cigarettes and laughed at each other. […] I could not escape the feeling that these simple, primitive people had understood the war more truly than our university professors and poets: namely, as a disaster that had come over them with which they had nothing to do, and that everyone who had stumbled into this misfortune was somehow a brother."[20]

Zweig was on the frontline itself, in the territory where, as late as the previous day, war operations had taken place. He saw the scenes of the frontline and witnessed the bestiality of war. He saw dirt, misery, hunger and death. Due to lack of medical staff Zweig helped the doctors on the way. They were exhausted and there wasn't enough blankets, medicines and bandages. Furthermore, there was a great confusion on the spot, caused by Babel of language. No one understood the wounded who spoke Slavic languages. A priest helped the doctors with translation, but he was also complaining of lack of oil needed for Extreme Unction, without which he couldn't fulfill his mission. Zweig wrote down the testimony of the old priest: "In all his long life he had never administered to so many people as during the past month"[21].

Zweig's stay near the frontline radically changed his perspective of how writers should behave in war. When he returned from the front, he decided not to hide his antiwar feelings anymore, but to write a drama. "I had recognized the foe I was to fight – false heroism that prefers to send others to suffering and death, the cheap optimism of the conscienceless prophets, both military and political. […] Whoever voiced a doubt hindered them in their patriotic concerns, whoever uttered a warning was ridiculed as a pessimist, whoever fought against the war in which they themselves did not suffer was branded a traitor. […] I chose for my symbol the figure of Jeremiah, the man of futile warnings"[22]. Zweig chose a Biblical figure and returned thus to his roots and experience of his own people. The people who have been always hunted and who have always found the way to survive. Zweig didn't believe his drama would be a success. Still, it has been sold out as a book in a large print run. A call came from Switzerland to stage his drama as a play, and for himself to come to Zurich and help with the play's adaptation. Zweig needed a formal approval from his superiors at the War Archives to leave the job and the country, and got it, in his own words - "unexpectedly easily". He spent the last two years of the Great War in the neutral Switzerland. On his returned to Austria, by-chance, he

[18] George Prochnik, The Impossible Exile: Stefan Zweig at the End of the World, New York: Other Press , 2015. 408.

[19] Штефан Цвајг, Јучерашњи свет [The World of Yesterday] Нови Сад: Будућност, 1962, p. 226.

[20] Ibid., p. 238.

[21] Ibid., p. 240.

[22] Ibid., p. 242.

got to witness the last Habsburg, Emperor Charles, leave the Austrian territory.

Peace, which came after so much destruction, was cheered all over the world. Everyone thought that peace has canceled the war, and there was a strong belief "that the beast which has devastated our world has been tamed and even destroyed". People around Zweig have believed in Wilson's program. They felt that Program like that was their own and plead for its implementation. Zweig, being a witness and participant of the events, wrote: "We were foolish, I know it. But we were not the only ones. Those whose lives spanned that time remember that the streets of every city resounded with cheers to acclaim Wilson as the savior of the world, that the hostile soldiers embraced and kissed each other; never was Europe so filled with faith as in the first days of peace. At last the earth was yielding place to the long-promised empire of justice and brotherhood; now or never was the hour for the united Europe of our dreams. Hell lay behind us; what was there to frighten us after that! Another world was about to begin. We were young, and said to ourselves: it will be the world of our dreams, a better, a more humane world."[23]

After some 10 years or so of untainted peace, the new war clouds were above Europe once again. In the neighboring Germany Hitler rose to political power. Daily newspapers have published long lists of "decadent" works in 1933, written by authors whose books were not in "the spirit of German nation". Next to the lists of writers: democrats, socialists, communists and the Jews, an information was published, naming the places where the destruction of books would take place. These books had to be destroyed, so that the New Germany could be free of that garbage. That same day, on the squares of Berlin and the main squares of 21 other German cities, the books have been burned[24].

The one who burns books will later burn humans. This was a clear signal to Zweig that he has to leave his organized life, rich collection of books, manuscripts and letters, and move out in order to save his bare life. Zweig predicted the Anschluss and chose England, which gave him anonymity, obscurity and isolation. He has returned to Austria only to sell his house in Salzburg and visit his mother in Vienna. However, his Austrian life was over.

After the outbreak of World War II, Zweig moved to the USA. He settled in the town of Ossining, New York. This was a dark place, only a mile distant from the notorious Sing-Sing jail. There he started to write his memoirs. USA made him depressive, so he moved to Brazil, where he finished his memoirs. Zweig's perspective of writing was the one of a man who had found peace with world and himself.

Zweig was very dissatisfied with direction the world took at that time: growing intolerance, Nazism and the feeling of helplessness about the future of mankind. His books were banned and burned. He thought that the language in which he wrote, has been polluted, since Hitler was using it. Incapable to cope with such reality, Zweig took his own life[25] in February 1942.

"The World of Yesterday" describes the *memories of a European* as the writer calls himself. Zweig's book is interesting and very valuable testimony of a bygone time. European bourgeoisie's life of early 20th century was well organized, ideally fulfilled and appropriate.

Zweig's life was a life of an intellectual, cosmopolite and humanist, who cruised around the world, met important people and made interesting conversations with them. "The World of Yesterday" contains portraits of interesting international personalities, originating from public and artistic (literary) circles, painted from Zweig's intimate perspective. By describing political events, discussing noble and, at the same time, naïve dreams of a united world, Zweig was making an anticipation of a wanted future, which sadly, failed to become reality.

The rich, happy and fulfilled life of European bourgeoisie was interrupted or cut short by Hitler's rise to power in Nazi Germany and by the Anschluss of Austria. Zweig's comfortable life of an Austrian and a Jew became endangered and worthless overnight. As a Jew, he had to abandon everything. His famous writings on English history made him eligible for emigration to England. However, his life was not the same, deprived of all the things he had loved and collected for many years.

In his own words, Zweig tried to "provide a mere reflection of a time, before it sunk into darkness".

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[23] Ibid., p. 269.

[24] http://www.vijesti.me/caffe/velika-lomaca-knjiga-logorske-vatre-nacisticke-buducnosti-127670 accessed 15.01.2017.

[25] http://afirmator.org/stefan-cvajg/ accessed 15.01.2017.

Who Wrote the Torah?

This week's 'Daf Yomi' Talmud study dives into a foundational puzzle of the religion

By Adam Kirsch

Literary critic Adam Kirsch is reading a page of Talmud a day, along with Jews around the world.

Who wrote the Torah? The question arose in last week's *Daf Yomi* reading, in a typically unexpected and elliptical fashion. The main subject of Chapter One of Tractate Bava Batra is the division of land between partners; last week we read about how co-owners of a field or a garden should go about building a wall to separate their areas. In Bava Batra 11a, the mishna goes on to specify that while a piece of land of any size can be divided by the mutual consent of the owners, the court cannot compel the division of a courtyard that is smaller than eight square cubits: "The court does not divide a courtyard unless there will be four cubits for this one and four cubits for that one." Likewise, the court cannot order the division of a field unless each plot will be sufficient to plant nine *kav* of seed.

The basic principle is that "anything for which when it is divided, each of the parts is large enough to retain the name of the original item, the court divides it. But if the parts will not retain the original name, the court does not divide it." This makes good sense: There is no point in dividing a field into pieces so small that they can't serve the function of a field. Better an adequate shared space than an inadequate private one. Perhaps one could deduce from this a Talmudic teaching about privatization in general: A society should not privatize goods that are only useful when held in common. This would include things like roads and public transportation, as well as intangible goods like clean air and water. Indeed, the rabbis teach in Bava Batra 12a that if the public establishes a right of way, such as a path, on private property, the owner cannot seize it: "If the public has chosen a route for itself, what they have chosen is chosen."

In the middle of this discussion, several pages are given over to the praise of charity, which, according to Rav Asi, is "equivalent to all the other *mitzvot* combined." Rabbi Elazar goes even further, saying that "one who performs acts of charity in secret is greater than Moses our teacher." The absolute centrality of charity, *tzedakah*, to Judaism is worth keeping in mind at a time when, according to news reports, the Trump administration is considering doing away with the tax deduction for charitable donations.

But charity, in the Talmud, is not just a matter of voluntary contributions; it is something closer to progressive taxation or wealth redistribution. Charity collectors are empowered to "seize collateral for the charity"—that is, to collect by force. Poor people are exempt from this, but rich people must give according to their means, as when "Rava compelled Rav Natan bar Ami and took 400 dinars from him for charity." Similarly, in Bava Batra 7b, Rabbi Yochanan decrees that when a city is building a common defensive wall, it should not divide the cost equally between the citizens but "collect based on net worth," with the rich paying more and the poor less. "Fix nails in this," Yochanan added, to emphasize that this was an ironclad rule.

In addition to small plots of land, the Mishna explains, another thing that cannot be divided is a scroll containing sacred writings. Even if both owners of the scroll want to divide it, they are not allowed to, since it would be disrespectful to the holy text. This statement leads, in the Gemara, to a discussion of how the Bible is to be written and organized. Is it allowed, for instance, to include all three parts of the Tanakh—the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings—in a single scroll? Rabbi Meir says yes, while Rabbi Yehuda says that each section should be a separate scroll. The Sages go even further, ruling that each individual book of the Prophets and Writings must be on a separate scroll. However, in practice, joining them into a single scroll is allowed, so long as each book is separated by four blank lines and the entire scroll has "enough empty parchment at the beginning for winding around the pole."

As for the size of the scroll, the Gemara instructs that the height of a Torah should be equal to its circumference when rolled up. However, this seems physically impossible and is certainly not the way Torah scrolls are made today. A Torah is always taller than it is wide; the only way to avoid this would be to use a very squat piece of parchment. Indeed, the Gemara itself acknowledges that the requirement is seldom met: "Rav Huna wrote 70 Torah scrolls and it happened for him only once that the length and the circumference were equal."

After discussing how to copy a Torah scroll, the Gemara moves on to the more interesting question of who wrote the Torah in the first place. The traditional Jewish answer, of course, is that Moses wrote it at the dictation of God. That is what the Talmud says in Bava Batra 15a: "The Holy One, Blessed be He, dictated and Moses repeated after him and wrote." But

the text of the Torah itself raises a problem for this idea, which is that after Moses' death, the book of Deuteronomy continues for another eight verses. How could Moses have written a description of his own death? "Is it possible that after Moses died, he wrote 'And Moses died there'?" asks the Gemara.

To avoid this absurdity, Rabbi Yehuda explains that the last eight verses of Deuteronomy were actually written by Joshua, Moses' successor. This explains why, when the Torah is read aloud, those eight verses are always assigned to a single reader, not divided up. They form a natural unit because they came from Joshua's hand. But Rabbi Shimon disagrees, suggesting instead that "the Holy One, blessed be He, dictated and Moses wrote with tears." It is a beautiful, poetic image—Moses outlining the letters in his own tears, mourning his death in advance.

Actually, the Gemara goes on to point out, the problem of posthumousness is found in several books of the Bible. The Talmud's basic principle is that most books of the Bible were written by their protagonists or namesakes: Joshua wrote the Book of Joshua, Samuel wrote the book of Samuel, Jeremiah wrote the book of Jeremiah. These same figures authored other books as well: Moses, the Gemara says, wrote the Book of Job in addition to the Torah, while Jeremiah wrote the Book of Kings and Lamentations. But many books, in addition to Deuteronomy, end by recording the deaths of their putative authors. To explain this, the Talmud says each was finished by another hand: Gad the seer and Nathan the prophet completed the Book of Samuel, while Pinehas completed the Book of Joshua. In this way, the Sages preserve the principle that the Bible was written by important figures named in the Bible itself.

The Book of Psalms is traditionally attributed to King David, but the Sages note that David did not write all 150 of the Psalms. Rather, he "wrote by means of 10 elders," editing together their poems into a single collection. These elders include Abraham, Melchizedek, and even Adam himself. While the Talmud does not say which poems can be attributed to which author, this idea assumes that human beings back to the time of Adam spoke and wrote Hebrew—a theory that seems to contradict the Bible's own story of the Tower of Babel. Still, the notion that Hebrew is the original language of humanity does reflect the Torah's way of narrating the history of creation, as a line leading directly to Abraham and his covenant with God.

Adam Kirsch embarked on the Daf Yomi *cycle of daily Talmud study in August, 2012. To catch up on Tablet's complete archive of more than four years of columns, click here.*

Why have the Jews Survived?

One of the great miracles of world history is the eternal vibrancy and relevance of Torah.

By Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein

It was with mixed emotions that I visited Humboldt University in Berlin a few weeks ago to deliver the annual Hildesheimer lecture on Jewish law. Humboldt is Berlin's oldest university. Marx and Engels studied there and Albert Einstein lectured there. On the other hand, the first Nazi book burning took place just outside the gates of the university. On the road just outside the university, is a plaque in memory of the Jewish students who were deported from the university during the Nazi era. It is a stark reminder of the darkness of the past. And now that same university hosts an annual lecture on the relevance of Torah law in the world today.

Standing in the heart of the university in one of its large lecture halls, speaking to a gathering from across the Jewish community of Berlin, as well as the senior faculty of the university and specifically its department of law, I was struck by the remarkable story of Jewish tenacity and survival despite all odds. A university which once reflected the worst of the Nazi horrors has now become an open platform for the teaching of Jewish law, and for partnership with the Jewish community.

This was, of course, merely one brief incident in the dramatic journey of Jewish history, replete with tenacity and courage, combined with miracles of Divine intervention and guidance. One of the most powerful and breathtaking emblems of this journey of Jewish history is the miracle of the reestablishment of Jewish sovereignty in the land of Israel only three years after the Holocaust and the subsequent dazzling development of the State of Israel in all spheres of human endeavor.

But that is only part of the story. There is another very important part, and that is the remarkable eternal vibrancy not only of the Jews, but of Judaism. The values and principles of the Torah that God gave us more than 3,300 years ago have guided and remained relevant to our survival every step of the way. And so speaking at the Humboldt University and sharing the relevance of Jewish law for today's times brought

home to me this other crucial dimension of the Jewish story.

Jewish law took morally visionary positions which Western law only came around to thousands of years later.

In my lecture I dealt with four areas of human rights: political power, a married woman's rights, the rights of a criminal accused and poverty alleviation. In each one of these areas Jewish law took morally visionary positions which Western law only came around to thousands of years later. I also demonstrated how the Torah often takes an approach which is more subtle and sophisticated in understanding the concept of vulnerability, in terms of which sometimes it is the individual and sometimes society which is considered to be the more vulnerable party.

Furthermore, I pointed out that many of the moral foundations of the modern world come from the Torah itself. This is what the famous (Catholic) historian Paul Johnson writes:

"All the great conceptual discoveries of the intellect seem obvious and inescapable once they have been revealed, but it requires a special genius to formulate them for the first time. The Jews had this gift. To them we owe the idea of equality before the law, both Divine and human; of the sanctity of life and the dignity of the human person; of the individual conscience and social responsibility; of peace as an abstract ideal and love as the foundation of justice, and many other items which constitute the basic moral furniture of the human mind. Without the Jews it might have been a much emptier place."

Johnson errs in ascribing these insights to the Jewish people, when in fact they were revealed to us by God.

One of the great miracles of world history is the eternal vibrancy and relevance of Torah, and this is an important part of the Jewish story. These values transform our story of survival into something infinitely meaningful and significant. Mere survival doesn't give meaning or significance to the experience. Why is it that we want to survive and retain our identity as the Jewish people? Why is it that throughout many generations and across the continents we have tenaciously clung to each other and survived despite all odds? Why is it that we are so passionate about maintaining a Jewish state in the midst of a hostile environment of enemies who seek our destruction? The answer to these questions lies within the teachings of Judaism, which have framed our experience of survival with meaning and significance. We seek not merely survival, but also to live by our Torah values and principles which infuse everything we do.

The story of the Jewish people is the story of the triumph of morality and goodness.

This is how it has been since the very birth of our people. When Moses asked Pharaoh for freedom in the name of God, he said, "Send my people that they may serve me." It was not only about survival and freedom – it was about a higher cause. It was about the values and the moral vision of being a Jew.

It is these values that infuse with meaning our valiant efforts in building the Jewish state in the ancient land of Israel. It is these values that inform the quest to preserve Jewish identity in the melting pots of modern Western society, where freedom and equality give us access to everything. It is these values that energize the remarkable rebirth of German Jewry. It is these values that make the story of the Jewish people not merely a story of survival, but a story of the triumph of morality and goodness, and the triumph of a profound and inspiring vision of the world.

Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein

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Why Did the *New York Times* Publish Fake News About Trump, Zionism, and Alan Dershowitz?

A Times opinion piece fabricated and erased the positions of American supporters of Israel, including Alan Dershowitz, in order to link Zionism to the alt-right

By Yair Rosenberg

On Nov. 20, the Zionist Organization of America, a small hard-right pro-Israel group, held its annual gala. To the chagrin of many in the American Jewish community, Donald Trump's newly-appointed senior strategist Stephen Bannon was scheduled to attend. Outside, scores of Jews protested. And inside, celebrated Zionist lawyer Alan Dershowitz, who had been scheduled to speak before Bannon had been invited, took the opportunity to issue a pointed warning to those in attendance.

"There is an equally disturbing trend that you might not be as happy to hear about, and that is the anti-Muslim and often bigoted extreme right that is pro-Jewish and pro-Zionist," the Harvard Law professor said. "I'm a little worried today that there are Jews in many parts of the world that are being seduced by the hard right. We must not become complicit in bigotry, whether it is from the right or the left… Being pro-Israel can never serve as an excuse for bigotry against any other group."

This warning was of a piece with Dershowitz's critique of Bannon, outlined in an op-ed titled: "Bannon's not an anti-Semite. But he is an anti-Muslim, anti-women bigot." Asked by *The New Yorker* about the anti-Bannon protesters outside the ZOA gala before his speech, Dershowitz said, "Part of me wants to be with them. But … I confront. In the twenties, Jews were seduced by Communists. Now it's by a populist right that has elements of Fascism. I'm going to try to warn against that tonight." For his performance, *The Daily Beast* dubbed Dershowitz "the bravest man of the night." Bannon ultimately didn't show.

And yet, remarkably, *The New York Times* published a piece yesterday which falsely claimed Dershowitz *defended* Bannon at the ZOA. Writing for *The Stone* philosophy blog in a post titled "Liberal Zionism in the Age of Trump," New School assistant professor Omri Boehm attempted to argue that "Zionism [is] a political agenda rooted in the denial of liberal politics" that inevitably dovetails with hard-right bigotry and apologism. His banner example? Alan Dershowitz.

Immediately after Trump appointed Bannon, the Zionist Organization of America prepared to welcome him at its annual gala dinner… Alan Dershowitz, the outspoken Harvard emeritus professor of law who regularly denounces non-Zionists as anti-Semitic, preferred in this case to turn not against Bannon, but against his critics. "It is not legitimate to call somebody an anti-Semite because you might disagree with their politics," he pointed out.

As you might suspect, the quote attributed here to Dershowitz at the ZOA did not actually appear in his speech at the ZOA. (It is a truncated line from an earlier TV interview wrenched from the context of Dershowitz's broader arguments to completely misrepresent his position.) This mistake matters not just for what it says about the intellectual integrity of the author and the editorial standards of this section of the *New York Times*—nothing good—but because it reveals the sleight-of-hand necessary to make the article's entire argument work.

Boehm claims that American Jews must either opt to "hold fast to their liberal tradition, as the only way to secure human, citizen and Jewish rights" or "embrace the principles driving Zionism" and become apologists for bigotry. The problem with this dichotomy is that it only holds up if one erases the great many Zionists who expose it as a false choice—which is exactly what Boehm proceeds to do. Thus, he inverts the position of a center-left Zionist like Dershowitz, who has been repudiating Zionist fascists since Boehm was five years old. He entirely omits the strident criticism of Bannon by the centrist Zionist Anti-Defamation League. The piece never quotes anyone affiliated with JStreet, the liberal Zionist lobby that has campaigned tirelessly against Bannon. And Boehm similarly elides conservative Zionists like *Commentary* editor John Podhoretz, who wrote that while Bannon may not personally be an anti-Semite, "it should go without saying that the president of the United States should not have a tawdry, destructive, and repulsively uncivilized goon as a chief strategist." None of these Zionists see any contradiction between opposing the forces of white nationalism and neo-Nazism while supporting the existence of the state of Israel, a country founded to protect Jews from the predations of those very evils. Moreover, many of these Zionists—like Dershowitz at the ZOA—have been warning their ideological allies against collaborating with the forces of the far-right. An honest appraisal of liberal Zionism's alleged apologism for fascism would have to actually grapple with the views of these people, and maybe speak to a few of them to understand their perspective. But it does not appear Boehm was interested in an honest appraisal. (At the close of his piece, he even recycles

the absurd slur that Yair Netanyahu, the son of Benjamin, is named after a fringe Jewish terrorist from Mandatory Palestine, when "Yair" is an extremely common Hebrew name that occurs multiple times in the Bible.)

To be clear, the problem is not that Boehm correctly argues against "the sanctification of Zionism to the point of tolerating anti-Semitism," but that he falsely claims that many Zionists haven't been sounding this very alarm. Even some on the Israeli far-right, which has at times played footsie with its European counterparts, have drawn lines in the sand over this issue. Just today, a senior Trump transition official canceled a meeting with Israel's Deputy Foreign Minister Tzipi Hotovely after the hawkish Israeli lawmaker refused to allow a far-right Swedish official to also attend the briefing. Clearly, Zionists do not conform to Boehm's caricature.

When one erases the moderate members of a minority in order to tar the entire collective with the brush of extremism, it's rightly called Islamophobia when it comes to Muslims. Yet when one does this to Zionists—who comprise the vast majority of Jews—buttressed by entirely false reporting, the *New York Times* appears willing to publish it, without even checking the quotes to see if they're accurate.

Unsurprisingly, Boehm's piece has been shared hundreds of times on social media by a jubilant alt-right—including by Richard Spencer, the godfather of the movement—thrilled to see Zionist Jews linked with neo-Nazis in the paper of record:

Earlier this month, *Times* Executive Editor Dean Baquet told NPR that he wants the paper to find ways to connect with Americans that it overlooked during this past election. Somehow, one suspects that going viral among white nationalists with a piece that falsely insinuates that Jews like Alan Dershowitz are neo-Nazi sympathizers was not exactly what he had in mind.

Then again, saying things that got enthusiastically retweeted by the alt-right is exactly the sort of thing Donald Trump did throughout his campaign. Perhaps *The Stone* blog can commission its next piece about the parallels between the ideals guiding its editorial decisions and those of Trump and white nationalism.

UPDATE: Boehm has responded on Twitter, arguing that he did not attribute the misleading quote to Dershowitz at the ZOA:

The original paragraph is ambiguously worded, but even if this is so, it does not materially change the more salient fact that Boehm inverted Dershowitz's entire position to paint him as an apologist for bigotry. Boehm did not address this issue on Twitter.

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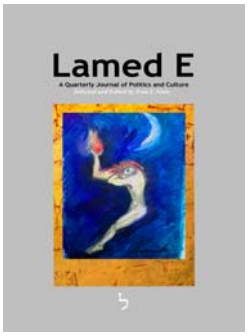

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