Tikkun

POLITICS • SPIRITUALITY • CULTURE

(tē•kün) To heal, repair, and transform the world.

SPRING 2017

WHY ONE PERSON/ ONE VOTE IS THE BEST STRATEGY

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ISRAEL'S OCCUPATION AT 50

STILL IMMORAL, STILL SELF-DESTRUCTIVE

Until the Occupation ends, let Palestinians in the Occupied Territories vote in Knesset elections

In this special issue on the 50th anniversary of the Occupation: Arik Ascherman, Issa Amro, Sami Awad, Suhad Babaa, Aaron Back, Sam Bahour, Cherie Brown, Ethan Buckner, Eric Cheyfitz, Aryeh Cohen, Ben Ehrenreich, Hagai El-Ad, Nizar Farsakh, Stefanie Fox, Ariel Gold, Tony Klug, Oren Kroll-Zeldin, Micha Kurz, Jonathan Kuttab, Michael Lerner, Mark LeVine, Yonah Lieberman, Shaul Magid, Elli Tikvah Sarah, Ilana Sumka, Ayelet Waldman, Arthur Waskow, David Zaslow, Simone Zimmerman, Stephen Zunes—and many more online!

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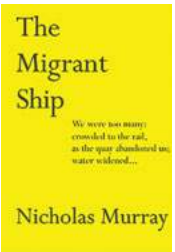
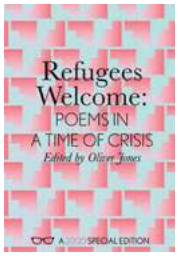
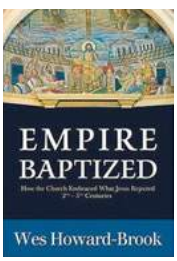


The Migrant Ship
Nicholas Murray
Melos Press, 2016



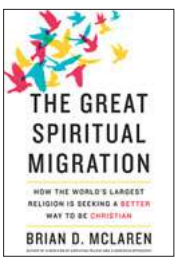
#refugees welcome: Poems in a Time of Crisis
ed. Oliver Jones
Eyewear Publishing, 2015

These two pamphlets from indie poetry presses in the UK showcase how poets across the pond have been responding to the Syrian Civil War, the confrontation with the West staged by ISIS, the refugee crisis that has arisen as a result, plus the immigration nightmare and its consequent social inequalities—all of which are felt more immediately and intensely there than in the U.S. *#refugees welcome*, which is a short anthology, includes English poets long associated with social action, such as Tom Phillips, alongside many younger voices originating from the Middle East, such as Alice Yousef and Zeina Hashem Beck. The poems vary widely, from verse reportage of working in the refugee camps (Thomas McColl), to spare, rhythmically taut images of violence (Kate Noakes), to the unsettling ironic distances between a world intact and another blown apart (Rosemary Appleton). The poems all evoke the radical American poet, Thomas McGrath's idea of the tactical poem, intended to move and mobilize people to a cause, in this case social justice for the dispossessed. Murray's *The Migrant Ship* works differently, teasing out the psychological implications of diaspora that are at once beautifully spare, allegorically open, and made with tough craft.



Empire Baptized
Wes Howard-Brook
Orbis Books, 2016

Wes Howard-Brook's *Come Out My People!* presented a compelling interpretation of the Bible as a struggle between two competing religious visions—a "religion of empire" and a "religion of creation" that seemed to parallel the account of Rabbi Michael Lerner's earlier Biblical interpretation in *Jewish Renewal: A Path to Healing and Transformation* between "settler Judaism" and "renewal Judaism." Now, Howard-Brook extends that analysis to show how the transition from the Jewish Jesus of the Gospels to the coercive Christianity in a book he titles, *Empire Baptized: How the Church Embraced What Jesus Rejected* (Second- Fifth Centuries).



The Great Spiritual Migration
Brian D. McLaren
Convergent Books, 2016

This same contradiction governs the Jewish religion today, though Jews voted 70% for Clinton, and it is a central spiritual and political reality for the U.S. Christianity which produced a victory for Trump which would not have happened had Christian evangelicals followed the teachings of Jesus rather than the Christianity of fear and domination (white evangelicals voting 90% for Trump) that formerly conservative Evangelical Brian McLaren seeks to replace in his latest (hopefully prophetic work) which he subtitles, *"How the World's Largest Religion is Seeking a Better Way to be Christian."* He presents a "Charter for a Just and Generous Christianity" which among other goals aims to make "love our highest aim—love for God and neighbor, for outsider and enemy, for ourselves and the good earth," and seeks "the common good, locally and globally, through churches of many diverse forms, contexts, and traditions, and we imagine fresh ways for churches to form Christlike people who join God in the healing of the world."

Bosch and Bruegel
Joseph Leo Koerner
Princeton U. Press, 2016

The beginnings of genre paintings of everyday life in northern Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries was, Harvard U. art historian Joseph Koerner tells us in this beautifully presented and deeply engaging book, "bound inextricably to what seems like its polar opposite: an art of the bizarre, the monstrous, the uncanny," particularly in the work of Hieronymous Bosch and Pieter Bruegel. At times using Biblical themes, but rendering them as though they were happening in a way that they viewer can feel personally both moved and scared, these painters have managed to be as alive to 21st century viewers as they were to the emerging humanism of their own time. Bosch's portrayal of the Garden of Earthly Delights may have been intended as a preface to the horrendous suffering that the devils of Hell were preparing for the sinners, but it nevertheless portrayed the possibilities of a community obsessed with sexuality that had never been more beautifully portrayed in world paintings. Bruegel captured the scenes of daily life for many peasants, and managed to elevate their suffering in striking colors, but it is impossible to miss his deep cynicism about human life and its pretenses. While humans are busily constructing this monumental skyscraper fantasy of overcoming God through technology, the viewer sees the tower being dwarfed by the expanse of the background scenes reminding us of the ending of this arrogant human attempt to storm heaven (in the tower being totally destroyed and humans scattered around the earth with a gaggle of languages and customs). Similarly, we see Bruegel's ability to mix pathos with sick humor as in his portrayal of the blind leading the blind (off a mountain side) or of a peasant proudly pointing to his son climbing (and apparently losing hold of) a tree, bringing to mind the Talmudic story Jewish contemporaries may have told him of a son obeying at once the only two biblical commands that specify a reward of "long life" (namely, honor your father and mother, and chase away the mother bird before taking its eggs), who tragically falls to his death, a scene which caused one of the great rabbis of the Talmud to lose his faith. Bosch and Bruegel remain favorites of those who wish to dis-identify with any literal belief in the Bible, while still acknowledging the power of its stories.

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Readers Respond

A NOTE ON LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We welcome your responses to our articles. Send letters to the editor to letters@tikkun.org. Please remember, however, not to attribute to *Tikkun* views other than those expressed in our editorials. We email, post, and print many articles with which we have strong disagreements because that is what makes *Tikkun* a location for a true diversity of ideas. *Tikkun* reserves the right to edit your letters to fit available space in the magazine.

THOUGHTS ABOUT COMPASSION

I very much appreciate your comments on the Left's need for compassion, and I believe that compassion is always in order. However, it also seems to me that compassion does not rule out honest talk when people are engaging in deep delusions. I come from a Christian background, so, if you will forgive me, I will refer to one of the greatest rabbis, Yeshua bar Yosef of Nazareth. He had some hard words for the scribes and Pharisees of his time, calling them hypocrites and a brood of vipers, but I think this was not because he lacked compassion, but because he needed to shake them out of complacency so that they could grow.

I completely agree that probably the vast majority of people who voted for Trump are not racist, sexist, homophobic, etc. in an overt form. They voted because of their pain. However, whether they meant to do so or not, their vote has given a kind of permission to open haters. Most of the people who voted for Hitler in 1933 were not overtly anti-Semitic, but that was certainly little comfort to the millions of Jewish people who were slaughtered; they were just as dead, even if those voters were saying something like, "I don't like Hitler's comments about Jews, but he is a patriot, so I am voting for him." I think you are right that judging and blaming others is not appropriate, but we cannot just keep giving ourselves a collective pass because we didn't know, we didn't mean it, or we're angry with our lives.

Yes, people here in the U.S. are suffering unjustly and should have their pain addressed; but what about the humility to see that other human beings in other places, equally deserving of a good life, are even more disempowered and in pain than ourselves? Can white men and women who still do have the necessities of life come to see that there are others in their own country and around the world who struggle not to have what they think they deserve to have, but just to have a dignified human existence? Should we not be commiserating with people's pain, but then asking them to use their own pain as a window through which they can see the bitter pain of others and extend empathy and solidarity? I think that would be honest, and not an uncompassionate stance.

Finally, I wonder when our leaders are going to tell the truth about the "American dream" and that to define it in the materialistic terms we have used can only lead to the pain of which you speak. The planet will not support the attempt to have every generation

Tikkun magazine is . . .

. . . a vehicle for spreading a new consciousness. We call it a spiritual progressive worldview. But what is that?

What Do You Mean by "Spiritual"?

You can be spiritual and still be an atheist or agnostic. To be spiritual, you don't have to believe in God or accept New Age versions of spirituality. You don't need to give up science or your critical faculties. We use the word "spiritual" to describe all aspects of reality that cannot be subject to empirical verification or measurement: everything pertaining to ethics, aesthetics, music, art, philosophy, religion, poetry, literature, dance, love, generosity, and joy. We reject the notion that everything worthy of consideration to guide our personal lives and our economic and political arrangements must be measurable.

What's a Spiritual Progressive?

To be a spiritual progressive is to agree that our public institutions, corporations, government policies, laws, education system, health care system, legal system, and even many aspects of our personal lives should be judged "efficient, rational, or productive" to the extent that they maximize love, caring, generosity, and ethical and environmentally sustainable behavior. We call this our New Bottom Line.

Spiritual progressives seek to build "The Caring Society: Caring for Each Other and Caring for the Earth." Our well-being depends upon the well-being of everyone else and also on the well-being of the planet itself. So we commit to an ethos of generosity, nonviolence, and radical amazement at the grandeur of all that is, and seek to build a global awareness of the unity of all being.

If you are willing to help promote this New Bottom Line for our society, you are a spiritual progressive. And if you are a spiritual progressive, we invite you to join our Network of Spiritual Progressives at spiritualprogressives.org.

MORE LETTERS

We receive many more letters than we can print! Visit tikkun.org/letters to read more.

"do better" materially than the last, as you know all too well. I will use an analogy from my own studies. As much as I loathed apartheid and tried in my own small way to work against it, I did sympathize in a certain way with the Afrikaners. When you have been told for your whole life that you have the right to four-fifths of everything, having to take a fair share is a real reduction and a real comedown. Coming down was painful for them, but those with moral courage came to realize that their system was fundamentally out of step with the truth. At some point, I think people deserve and need to be told with as much tact as possible, but still factually, that they are chasing a chimera which will only bring themselves and others unimaginable suffering in the end. If we do not practice compassion, but still tell ourselves the hard truths about our history and the choices we face, I don't know how we will ever rectify ourselves and our country. Thank you for all you do, and I pray that God will bless you always.

With love and respect,
Jackie Vieceli, Mankato, Minnesota

EDITOR'S RESPONSE:
Thanks for this profound grappling with very important issues.

I have never advocated abandoning the struggle for social justice for all. The question that I'm raising is: "What is the most effective way to achieve a just, love-filled, environmentally sustainable, and joyous world?" And my answer is that we must frame our challenges to the status quo in terms of changing a system that is unjust, but at the same time we must affirm compassion for those who have participated in that system and benefited from it, and not write them off as our enemy when they vote for candidates who, like themselves, believe that the existing system is the only possible realistic alternative to oppressive regimes all around the world that they read about daily. Some of these people voted for Obama and were inspired to hope when Obama ran for President, but then felt betrayed by his failure to fight for the kind of world he had encouraged us to believe he would be seeking. Many felt humiliated that they had allowed themselves to believe in the possibility of a more just world after Obama's multiple betrayals which we will write about in more detail in the Fall 2017 issue of *Tikkun*. We must also recognize (as you do in your discussion of the Afrikaners) the very difficult path it is for people to have to give up a lot unless they can see that what the system gives them in material terms is not worth what it takes away from them in destroying the possibility of a community based on generosity and mutual caring for each other and for the earth.

Moreover, we must challenge the Left to stop painting all who are not with us as evil or fundamentally attached to materialism, selfishness, racism, sexism, Islamophobia, and xenophobia, because while some are, many are not and are moved to the Right by their anger at feeling under-recognized and disrespected by many in the liberal and progressive world.

In my article in the Fall 2016 issue of *Tikkun* and in my book *The Left Hand of God: Taking Back Our Country from the Religious Right*, I've explained how the self-blaming generated by the capitalist ideology of meritocracy makes tens of millions of people feel bad about themselves, and while the Right relieves the self-blaming (although in a destructive way by blaming people's pain on the "Other"—usually some relatively powerless group), the Left increases people's pain both by its disrespect for their religious lives and by its put-downs of all those who have not yet joined us as either stupid or evil. It turns out that shaming and blaming are not smart strategies. So it is out of a desire to overcome the racism, sexism, homophobia, Islmoaphobia, and anti-Semitism that flourishes in some corners of the Right that I have proposed a strategy that involves compassion and empathy, but goes much further in articulating a vision of the kind of world we want, not just our complaints about the world we are in!

IN RESPONSE TO "PSYCHOPATHOLOGY IN THE 2016 ELECTION"

I find the article brilliant, but tomorrow night at my father's dinner table he will ask the question, "Well, what do we replace capitalism with?" And I still won't have an answer. A more compassionate world just won't do it for him or many of the "Dads" like him. People want a better economic system. What is that specifically? If I have failed to find that in the article please let me know. In three weeks we might be evicted from our apartment because we are caught in a capitalist system that just doesn't care about us so I'm on your side, but would like to know more.
—*Cassandra Freeman,* Vancouver, Canada

EDITOR'S RESPONSE:
Please read www.tikkun.org/covenant to see our positive vision of what a spiritually progressive system could be.

READING IN THE RAIN

I received the Fall 2016 issue on Monday and took it with me yesterday to serve as a Florida election attorney to assure that Trump's threats of voter suppression were only threats. I read it in the rain and either want a digital copy or 20 copies to distribute to my Sunday school class now studying white privilege. The article *Psychopathology in the 2016 Election* by Rabbi Lerner and the article on *Educating for Hope and Possibility in Troubled Times* by Svi Shapiro ought to be required reading for all progressives, and for all Buddhists.
—*Herndon Inge*, Mobile, Alabama

IN RESPONSE TO "DON'T LET TRUMP RUIN YOUR CHRISTMAS OR CHANUKAH"

My profound thanks to you and everyone involved in the extraordinary integrity of your message. A huge risk of our times is that instantaneous communication destroys any sense of history. When that goes, all points of comparison are lost. In the best Hebraic tradition you remind us the recorded human experience is largely a tragedy. For the most part the Divine message is lost and becomes illuminated only in all too rare moments when we respond to the Divine in standing for compassion for all persons in their dignity and well-being.

Here, in the most advanced nation, this takes forms specific to the details of laws that would either advance or restrict movement toward what the Prophets call upon us to do. You have reminded us of this at a time when all parties act as if they are called to partisan division and unequal weighing of crucial elements. Your message is a superb gift equally on behalf of our adherence to guidance from the Divine and to human well-being.
—*Glenn Pascall*, Dana Point, California

Join Our Movement

Through the work of the Network of Spiritual Progressives—the interfaith and secular-humanist-welcoming activist organization associated with this magazine—*Tikkun* is creating a movement with a positive vision of the world we want to create: a world of love, generosity, social justice, compassion, and caring for each other.

tikkun.org/join

Still Immoral, Still Stupid

Let's End 50 Years of Israel's Occupation of the West Bank—One Person/One Vote

BY RABBI MICHAEL LERNER

Family relationships can be very complicated. One can be extremely angry at a parent, a sibling, even one's own child, deeply disapprove of some of their actions, and yet still love them quite deeply. That is the situation facing many Jews in the Israeli Left and increasing numbers of American Jews who are united around the following demands of the government of Israel:

- End the Occupation and end the daily violence against Palestinians that is an intrinsic part of almost every attempt by one nation to dominate another by force.
- Acknowledge Israel's role in creating the Palestinian refugee problem (not 100 percent Israel's fault, but definitely a large part Israel's fault).
- Stop calling Israel a "democracy" when it rules over two million Palestinians and does not give them the right to vote in Israeli elections or otherwise participate in shaping the decisions that impact their lives.
- Stop the building of illegal Jewish settlements on Palestinian land and stop the displacement of any more Palestinians. Accept the validity of UN Security Council Resolution 2334 which "reaffirms that the establishment by Israel of settlements in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, has no legal validity and constitutes a flagrant violation under international law and a major obstacle to the achievement of the two-state solution and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace." As *Tikkun*'s contributing editor Mark LeVine pointed out, this resolution reminds Israel's government and its American apologists that its half-century policy of creating "facts on the ground" as a way to normalize the Occupation and the settlement enterprise it has always been intended to support, has been for nothing, no matter how much Palestinian land Israel claims to have annexed.
- Stop the legal assaults on the rights of Jewish and Palestinian-Israeli poets, writers, artists, and human rights activists who are doing nothing but speaking out or protesting the Occupation. And along those same lines, apply the same standard of law to both Israelis and Palestinians both in the territories and throughout the rest of the country.

Many Jews feel a special connection to the land of Israel, and we care about Israelis, worry about their survival, and have compassion for them, even while detesting the violent actions of some of them, the arrogance of many of their leaders, the seeming obliviousness of many of them to what they are doing to the Palestinian people and their willingness to tolerate a government that promotes hatred toward Palestinians—a government that slowly but systematically steals Palestinian lands and ignores human rights while simultaneously aligning itself with the most reactionary, sexist, and intolerance-promoting elements of the Jewish religious establishment. That establishment imposes its practices on the secular Israeli majority as the price for its willingness to give a green light to repressive policies of the government—along the way turning many Israelis into intolerant secularists who blame all the country's problems on religious Jews.

Many of us also feel a family tie to our cousins the Palestinian people, both Christian and Muslim Palestinians, spiritual descendents of our ancestors Abraham and Sarah, and have compassion for them, and are outraged at how they are being treated by Israel, even as we consistently critique the violent actions of Hamas and the anti-Semitism that persists in parts of the West Bank and Gaza.

We also are concerned that the policies of the Israeli government, by calling itself "the State of the Jewish people," and the largely blind support it has received from many of the major institutions of the Jewish community, have besmirched the reputation of Jews as a people concerned with ethics and justice.

We see increasing evidence that Israel's policies are turning younger Jews against not only Israel, but against Judaism. One can enter almost any synagogue in America—Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist, or even the highly spiritual Jewish Renewal movement—and be welcomed even if one doesn't believe in God, doesn't want to follow the Jewish traditions, or even has no particular interest in studying the Jewish holy texts. But if one announces one's opposition to the policies of the State of Israel and/or support for the human rights of the Palestinian people, one is

Palestinian women crossing through the Qalandiya checkpoint (run by the Israeli military) between Jerusalem and Ramallah for prayer at the Al-Aqsa mosque during Ramadan in June 2016. Men over 45 and women were allowed to cross through without permits.

Ahmad Al-Bazz | Activestills

treated as a heretic and often given the clear message they are not welcome and their views are outside the range of acceptable discourse. De facto, Israel has become the god of many Jews, and the Israeli army has become that god's emissary on earth—the one thing that they fully trust. In their mostly blind worship of the State of Israel, large swaths of the Jewish people are massively abandoning the values that the Jewish tradition urged us to embody—loving kindness, justice, peace, mercy, compassion, slowness to anger, forgiving iniquity, and transgressions—in the one place in the world where Jews have the power to actually implement these values in an entire nation state. Thousands of years from now, if the human race survives the current destruction of our environment, Jews will look back with deep shame at how the Jewish people let our tradition be so polluted by support for Israel's inhumanity toward the Palestinians for the past fifty years, and continuing now.

But even here, some compassion is needed for our people. For many Jews, God's failure to "show up" and save the Jews from the Holocaust, and the refusal of most nations of the world to open their gates to Jews seeking refuge, led to disillusionment about the possibility of a world based on love and justice. Thus the hard-nosed neoconservatives and their recycling of the ancient and perverted view that "might makes right" in international politics.

The utopian and socialist branches of the Zionist movement quickly faded as more and more Jews came to believe that the only thing they can really count on is the power of the Israeli army and the potential sanctuary they might find in Israel should future upsurges of anti-Semitism (beginning to show its ugly face once again around the world in the past ten years, and more recently in the U.S. responding to the legitimation of hatred and demeaning of others during the 2016 election period by Donald Trump) threaten Jewish safety once again. Unable to shake the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) that infected not only the survivors but also the millions of Jews whose families or friends were wiped out in this genocidal attempt to murder all Jews on the planet, the previously marginal right wing Zionism of Herut (now Likud) became the predominant "common sense of the Jewish people," even infecting those who still hold on to a belief in God yet put more trust in military strength than in the power of love and generosity.

So modern Orthodox and other observant Jews utter prayers in their synagogues for the State of Israel and for its army, claiming it to be "the beginning of the flourishing of our redemption," while downplaying the pressing social justice messages of the Torah and the prophets and their relevance to the realities of contemporary politics both in the Middle East and in the U.S. Most notably ignored:

Israeli soldiers try and push back demonstrators during a protest against the Occupation in the village of Nabi Saleh in the West Bank, in December 2013.

Keren Manor | Activestills

the frequent repetition of Torah commandments to "love the stranger/the Other" (ha'ger) and to not do to them what was done to us when we were "strangers in the land of Egypt."

Indeed, many Jews of this sort who claim to believe in God nevertheless hold the view that we can't trust others, that the "other" always wants to hurt us, and that the only thing to count on is force and violence. This way of thinking, as I demonstrate in my book *Jewish Renewal: A Path to Healing and Transformation*, is precisely the view that Judaism came into the world to challenge. Those who trust only in power are following the path of Pharaoh, of Sodom, of the Roman Caesars, of Hitler and Stalin, of Nixon and of Kissinger, of the neocons, and now of Trump. It's the antithesis of Judaism, but it is to some extent the logic of global capitalism, imperialism, and domination. Yet I've heard it echoed in many synagogues by rabbis and others who are liberal on every other topic, but revert to this kind of thinking when it comes to discussing making peace with the Palestinian people and allowing them the same freedom we celebrate for ourselves at Passover each year.

Yet it is hard for any of us who understand the traumas faced by the Jewish people, and recognize how brutally we have been treated by much of the world for much of the past two thousand years, to approach this issue without some compassion. That compassion must extend to the people of Israel whose very existence as a country has always been challenged by all the states surrounding it, states that were meanwhile brutalizing their own minorities and sometimes their majorities as well! Think Syria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq, and today even Turkey!

This complex of feelings mirrors that of many progressives in the U.S. toward our own country. We know that the U.S. has been one of the most violent and destructive countries in the world in the past sixty years. We understand its horrendous imperialist policies have led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands in Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Iraq, and the countries of South and Central America. Building on the criminal legacy of previous European colonialists, the U.S. has perpetuated and exacerbated the impoverishment of millions through its imposed trade agreements and unequivocal support for a global economic system that leaves 2.5 billion people living on less than $2 a day and 1.5 billion living on less than $1 a day. The UN estimates between 6,000-10,000 children under the age of five die every single day around the world because of curable diseases linked to malnutrition that the U.S. could end were that our priority (see our Global and Domestic Marshall Plan at www.tikkun.org/gmp for details).

We know that we live in a country in which over 2,000,000

people are imprisoned, African Americans are often unsure whether they will be arbitrarily arrested or even physically assaulted (in many cases murdered) by racist police, Native Americans' rights are are similarly violated on a daily basis (our treaty arrangements with them ignored and their land violated in dozens of ways, most recently at Standing Rock in North Dakota), and millions of undocumented workers live in constant fear of arrest and deportation to countries they escaped in order to avoid being killed, raped, imprisoned, or simply returned to the ranks of those slowly dying of malnutrition (repressive policies dramatically escalated by the Obama Administration and we fear worse from the Trump presidency).

We know that we live in a country where haters and overt racists can win elected offices and where sexists and homophobes continue to degrade women and LGBTQ people. We at *Tikkun* have embraced much of the platform of the Movement for Black Lives because it so effectively nails the racism in this country and provides powerful counter-measures (even while taking exception to their description of Israel as engaged in genocide).

And yet, many of us, while using our political energies to nonviolently struggle to change this system, nevertheless love the U.S. and the American people, appreciate the complexities of their lives which have led some to respond to their class oppression by joining hateful movements, and others to endorse militarism out of fear that they and their families may someday become targets of radical extremists and terrorists. These people have much pain in their lives, and the response of *Tikkun* is not to disparage them, but to help them see that there are other paths to dealing with and relieving that pain besides demeaning others.

There are very few of us on the American Left who call for the United States to be dismantled for its crimes, though they far exceed those of Israel, as do the crimes of Russia, China, Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Syria and so many other countries. No wonder, then, that we can understand Israelis whose fears are leading them in destructive directions, particularly when they hear about people calling for the actual dismantling of Israel. Just as we can love our fellow citizens in this country, we can love people in Israel and in Palestine even as we disagree with the paths they have chosen to deal with past pains and current fears, and even as we are outraged at the continuing oppression and racism against Palestinians.

So, yes, we have complex feelings about Israel. In my book *Embracing Israel/Palestine: A Path to Middle East Peace* I try to tell the story of the past 140 years of this struggle in a nuanced way, demonstrating that both sides of this struggle have legitimate claims, and both have been inordinately insensitive to the needs of the other side. In each case, the partisans of one side have focused on the extreme haters on the other side and used their actions to justify acts of violence or oppression that have incensed the citizens of the other side and made each people more likely to embrace their most extreme elements. Order it at www.tikkun.org/eip.

But seeing this as a situation caused by the ethical failures and psychological blindness of many people on each side of the struggle does not lead us at *Tikkun* to conclude that there is nothing to do to heal the situation. The reality of 2017 (and this has been the reality for a good part of the past fifty years) is that Israel has vastly more economic, political, and military power than the Palestinian people and hence has the greater responsibility to solve the problem.

The first step would be to end the Occupation, and in a generous spirit and honoring the Torah's command "Justice, justice shalt thou pursue/chase after," create a Palestinian state.

Yet the political reality at the present moment makes that highly unlikely no matter which major political party in Israel would win the next election. Though we've been strong advocates for a two-state solution for the past thirty years, and still believe that to be the best achievable path for the next thirty years until our more visionary plan—the no state solution, which includes the transformation of the global political reality from a nation-state configuration to an environmental district configuration—becomes obtainable. Given the reality on the ground, I now believe that the best way to reach a two state solution is to advocate for a short-term solution: inclusion of all of the Palestinian people inside the West Bank and Gaza in the democratic processes of those who rule over them. Simply put: "one person, one vote."

One Person, One Vote

We need to build on the movement for One Person/One Vote in Israel/Palestine (including the West Bank and Gaza). If Israel is not prepared to end the blockade of Gaza and help Palestinians create an economically and politically viable state of their own, then it must give all Palestinians a vote in the Knesset elections, since de facto all Palestinians are living under the control of the Israeli state.

The demand for One Person/One Vote brings attention to the central problem that most Americans have to face: that although we claim to be for democracy, we are supporting the denial of democracy for the Palestinian people. This is nothing new. America's hypocrisy about democracy has been revealed over and over again: The counting of African Americans as 3/5 of a human being in order to give slave states more representation in the Congress, denying felons who have served their time the right to vote, blocking a direct democratic election of president by creating an electoral college which gives disproportionate power to small population states. But it is also true that tens of millions of Americans used democratic processes and mobilized to support the Civil Rights Movement, oppose the war in Vietnam, the suppression of liberation movements in South and Central America, and U.S. support for apartheid in South Africa.

An Israeli soldier points his gun at protestors during a demonstration against the Occupation and separation wall in Al Walaja in the West Bank in September 2007.

Oren Ziv | Ryan Rodrick Beiler | Activestills

One Person/One Vote has a strong resonance in the U.S., the West, and even among many Israelis who have long believed that their strength and support in the world comes from being "the one democracy in the Middle East." This strategy confronts that false belief, challenges the U.S. and the West to support their own commitments to democracy, and opens the door to speaking to the American majority whose loyalty to Israel is based more on guilt at what the world had done to the Jews than on any serious thought about what the Palestinian people deserve. The guilt is appropriate, but the response of giving Israel blind support is not.

The One Person/One Vote strategy must differentiate itself from those calling for an end to the State of Israel and the creation of a secular state with no particular allegiance to the Jewish people. After two thousand years of oppression, most Jews will not accept the elimination of the only state in the world that has a commitment to provide safety for the Jewish people. Hence, there would have to be a voting requirement for those invited to participate in the elections of this state or to serve in its Knesset: that they sign an agreement that until all anti-Semitism has been eliminated in the world, the State of Israel will continue to give priority to Jews seeking to move to Israel who can demonstrate a well-founded belief that they are in danger because of their Jewishness in the country where they currently hold citizenship (just as the laws governing immigration to the U.S.). As I argued in *Embracing Israel/Palestine*, when Palestine comes into existence as a separate state, something I still hope for, I'll be advocating for it to have this same kind of affirmative action for Palestinians around the world who can demonstrate a well-founded belief that they are in danger because they are Palestinians, or Muslims.

Meanwhile, once this newly democratized Israel is created, Palestinians will be able to use their democratic rights to create full equality for all its Palestinian citizens as well as for anyone else to whom the State of Israel has offered asylum or has brought in to work in Israel. They should have the right to give equal public recognition to the holidays and religious observances of all of Israel's different populations, not only to the Jewish ones.

In such a state, Israel's observance of the Sabbath can have equal status with Christian observance of Sunday and Muslim observance of Friday as their "weekend," and Hebrew should have the same status of being one of the two official languages of the state along with Arabic. In this way, we differentiate what part of Israel as "the Jewish state" is legitimate and needs to be preserved (its guarantor as a safe homeland for Jews from around the world) and what part should be subject to democratic negotiation (the integration of Arab culture and practices into the fabric of Israeli education, and the separation of synagogue and mosque from the State). Of course, once established, leaders of a democratized Israel will

have to address how to handle the many questions of citizenship, Palestinian refugees, immigration, reparations and the like.

The One Person/One Vote strategy will only catch on if its supporters champion a democratic ethos that many Americans hold, but have not yet applied when thinking about Israel and Palestine. If this "one person/one vote" movement grows, and simultaneously and unambiguously affirms Israel's right to exist and provide a guaranteed homeland and place of refuge for Jews, but only as a democratic state, its power will move many Israelis back to the peace camp.

Indeed, such a movement would be the very thing that might push Israeli right-wingers to believe that the one way they can stop this kind of a call for democracy is to engage for the first time since the Oslo Accords in a genuine negotiation with Palestinians about how to create an economically and politically viable Palestinian state and how to deal with Palestinian refugees. I suggest that in such a negotiation for two states that Israel accept 20,000 Palestinian refugees into the pre-67 boundaries of Israel every year for the next thirty, a number small enough to not upset the demographic balance, but large enough to be seen as a genuine move toward peace, particularly if accompanied, as it must, by the other countries of the world who have a stake in Middle East Peace funding reparations for the Palestinian people as well as reparations for Jews forced to flee Arab states from 1945-1960. I also suggest that a viable peace deal, sponsored by the Israeli right-wing as a way of escaping the global pressures that a "one person/one vote" movement would likely spur, would allow West Bank Israelis to continue to live in their settlements, but only after accepting Palestinian citizenship, agreeing to live by the laws and court decisions of the Palestinian state, disarmed, and giving up their Israeli citizenship. Israel would agree to never intervene on behalf of these newly minted Jewish Palestinians in the court decisions of the Palestinian state. As Orthodox rabbi and West Bank settler Menachem Fruman (z"l) told his followers, the Torah command and right of the Jews to live in any part of the holy land (Eretz Yisrael), preserved in the approach I suggest here, did not entail the right to live in a Jewish state, but did obligate Jews to love their fellow human beings (the geyreem/or Other) as themselves.

If millions of Americans rallied around this demand for One Person/One Vote for Israel and Palestine, and if they supported candidates for public office who held that same position, it could within the next sixteen years change a great deal in U.S. politics and in Israel. Ironically, it may well be the most realistic strategy to achieve an Israeli majority for a generous two state solution along the lines suggested in the previous paragraph!

While pushing for this inside the U.S., an intelligent peace movement would also work to create an "empathy tribe" of thousands of peace oriented people from around the world who would go to Palestine, Israel, and to Jewish communities in the U.S. and other major populations of Diaspora Jewry with the aim of helping the Israeli people and world Jewry heal from their PTSD and develop empathy for the suffering that their country's policies have inflicted on the "others."

Tikkun has long advocated that what would make such changes possible could come from the U.S. and the West abandoning its belief that "homeland security" can best be achieved through domination (military, economic, political, cultural and diplomatic). Instead we should all be adopting the Strategy of Generosity, manifested in part in the Tikkun version of the GMP—a Global and Domestic Marshall Plan with the advanced industrial countries of the world donating 1-2% of our Gross Domestic Product each year for the next twenty—sufficient to end, not just ameliorate, global poverty, homelessness, hunger, inadequate education, inadequate health care, and repairing the damage 150 years of irresponsible forms of industrialization has done to the life support system of our environment. It's not just the money that would be important, but the new way of thinking that is crucial—thinking that caring for others is the path to security because it will eventually elicit from others that same caring.

We are not suggesting that the most extreme haters and terrorists will suddenly become transformed through this approach, but rather that their ability to recruit support from the rest of their communities will dramatically decrease.

If a Bernie Sanders-type candidacy for president in the 2020 presidential elections went beyond the stale economistic rhetoric that failed to win Bernie the Democratic nomination in 2016, and adopted a heart-centered spiritual progressive politics, s/he might not only dramatically bring back sanity to American politics but also create a strong American incentive to push Israel toward either a single democratic society or a two-state solution based on generosity and empathy for both sides of the struggle.

This could in turn create an Israeli majority ready to not only free the Palestinian people but also create a movement in Israel that was its first genuinely Jewish political movement—namely one that actually believed in a world of love and justice and had the backbone to say that it was these values that were the only authentic ones for a Jewish state. Such a movement, advocating generosity in providing reparations to the Palestinian refugees and support for creating an economically and politically viable Palestinian state living in peace with Israel, and eventually becoming its strongest ally, would be more rational, realistic and sustainable than the movement that now seeks to perpetuate the Occupation for another fifty years or longer!

No strategy that seeks to coerce Israel to end the Occupation and create a Palestinian state has a chance at this historical moment. According to a Pew Research Center poll in May of 2016, "Far more Americans continue to sympathize more with Israel (54%) than with the Palestinians (19%) in

the Middle East dispute." If those of us who want to free Palestine from Israel's domination focus on what tactic to use to coerce Israel to change while we don't have close to a majority of Americans believing that Palestinians are basically right in their cause, we are unlikely to be successful though we may get lots of attention. But attention is not our goal—reconciliation between Israel and Palestine and lasting peace is our goal.

And let's stick to the actual facts. Rather than using inflammatory words like "apartheid" and "genocide," as some of the authors in this issue of *Tikkun* magazine are doing, we will be far more effective if we simply describe the conditions under which Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza are living. Those facts are powerful enough to help people see why the Occupation needs to end. Once we get into these more global claims, we end up giving those who wish to discount the oppression Palestinians face daily a way to switch the topic to whether this is "really" apartheid or genocide. Not a smart strategy when facing an American population that has just elected in November 2016 Republicans and Democrats who seem nearly totally united in defense of Israel's policies. Let's be smart if we want to actually win a change in consciousness in the American people. The same diversion happens when peace-oriented progressives try to organize people around specific strategies to coerce Israel to change its policies—the conversation switches to the legitimacy of the coercions being proposed, and away from the outrage people might feel if the focus was on educating them to what is the daily experience of living under Israeli occupation!

Far more plausible is the strategy proposed here: focus not on the tactics of political and economic coercion, but on changing the American public's view of the fundamental legitimacy of the Palestinian's cause for equal rights with Israelis. That could happen if the peace movements here, in Israel and in Palestine endorse the version of the "One Person, One Vote" strategy proposed here by *Tikkun*. And this will only happen if all of us unite and launch a multi-year education campaign similar to that of the Civil Rights Movement and the teach-ins that energized the movement against the war in Vietnam in the 1960s. With sufficient sensitivity, empathy and generosity of spirit, we could accomplish a powerful change of consciousness!

This is the real challenge—not headline grabbing, but the day-to-day, neighborhood and community group organizing around a vision of the world we want, not just what we are against. We at *Tikkun* and the Network of Spiritual Progressives can play our part, but this will take the participation and support of all those who really want to achieve the kind of liberation from Occupation that will benefit the Israelis, the Palestinians, the Jews, and all others on this planet.

In this issue of Tikkun we invited a broad swath of people, including many who disagree with us to our left and to our right, to comment on what the Occupation has meant to them and/or their ideas about how to end it. For space reasons, or because some of those writers didn't meet the deadline for our print version of *Tikkun*, some of those articles will appear only on our website, but most are printed here. If you appreciate *Tikkun* being this kind of forum in which you can hear ideas openly debated, trusting our readers to make up their own minds rather than just presenting our own perspective, help keep us alive. We count on your tax-deductible donations to keep *Tikkun* going. If you appreciate what we do, stretch beyond what you would normally give to a cause you believe in, make yourself a bit uncomfortable, but help keep this important voice alive! www.tikkun.org/donate or send a donation by check to *Tikkun*, 2342 Shattuck Ave #1200, Berkeley, Ca. 94704.

And may peace, justice, security and well-being come to Israel, to the Palestinian people, and to all people on this planet, speedily and in our own day! ■

—Rabbi Michael Lerner, written in December 2016 for our 50th anniversary of the Occupation issue Spring 2017.
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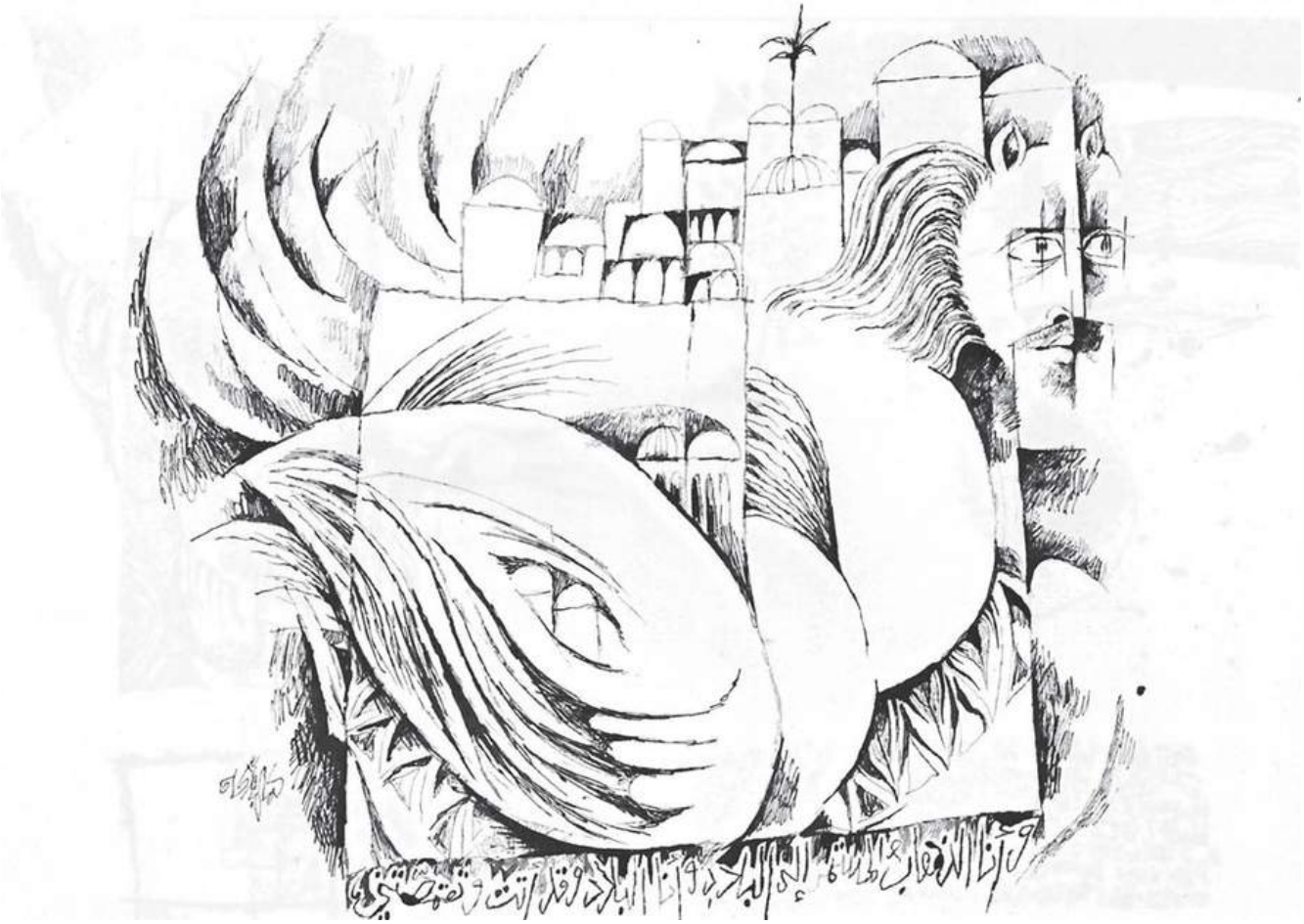

What the Collapse of the Two-State Solution Means for Palestinian and Israeli Nationalism

BY JONATHAN KUTTAB

For about a century now, the Zionist movement and the Palestinian nationalist movement have been locked in furious struggle, where each side felt its very existence threatened by the other. Each laid exclusive claims to the same piece of real estate, and made little effort to understand or appreciate the other. To the contrary, the struggle was waged on the basis of mutual exclusion, and a zero-sum approach. After the stunning victory of Israel in 1967, a historic opportunity appeared to break this log-jam: The formula (land for peace) would require Israel to

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Kamal Boullata

withdraw back to the pre-1967 border, and establish a Palestinian Arab state in the area of the West Bank and Gaza that would be returned to Arab sovereignty. Some form of joint sovereignty over Jerusalem, demilitarization of the new state, and other minor changes would round up the picture, and the conflict would be resolved. The two-state solution appeared to provide for a reasonable pragmatic compromise that limited the demands of each side to a portion of the disputed land, roughly outlined by the 1967 border, and an international consensus developed around that solution, which after initial resistance, seemed to capture the verbal support of a majority of the populations representing the opposing movements.

Yet the struggle continued, and the overwhelming power of the State of Israel and the Zionist movement gave full sway to the settlement movement as it created facts on the ground totally in line with its own ideology and aspirations, and contrary to the wishes of the Palestinians, as well as to the logic of the two-state solution.

The changes that were created by the settlement movement were sufficient to render the two-state solution no longer tenable. The physical facts on the ground, the transfer of over half a million Jews into what was to be an Arab Palestinian state, the creation of an elaborate legal, administrative, psychological, and physical structure on the ground in the "Occupied Territories" as well as the thorough integration of the Occupied Territories into the Israeli system, made such a geographical separation no longer feasible. At the same time, it slowly became evident that despite the huge disparity in power between the two antagonists, neither side was going to disappear, and that a solution needed to be found within the unitary totality of the Land that accommodates both parties. The attempt to fragment the Palestinian people into disparate and disjointed communities, while physically successful, has failed to obliterate their sense of identity as a people, or to dissipate their national ardor.

Those who are willing in any way to step out of their narrative, and listen to, and attempt to, accommodate the "other" rather than ignore, deny, attempt to obliterate, delegitimize, and demonize the Other are faced with a genuine need to adjust their own ideology to somehow incorporate, embrace, or at least account for the hopes, desires, and aspirations of the other party.

For Palestinians, this means that they need to radically alter their nationalism. They will need to abandon their claim that Palestine is exclusively Arab ("Falasin Arabiyyeh") and their belief that Israeli Jews are nothing but foreign settler-colonialists who have no right to remain in their stolen homeland, with the exception of those "Palestinian Jews" who were indigenous to the land from before 1948. Their goal of the Liberation of Palestine (as opposed to Ending the Occupation) must now recognize that in the liberated Palestine will live about 7 million Jews who consider it their home, and, liberation or not, their future state will have to be binational.

For Israelis, the Zionist dream of a Jewish state will need to be modified to recognize, finally, that their state will have to accommodate a local indigenous population of almost equal number to the Jews, who will never accept permanent dispossession and disenfranchisement. The Zionist dream, which fired the imagination of many Jews and non-Jews, will finally be forced to come to terms with a reality that massive military, financial, scientific, and international power has failed to eclipse. The Jewish state they attempted to create must somehow come to terms with the indigenous non-Jews inhabiting the Land. They need to answer the query of whether a state can be Jewish and still accommodate and provide genuine belonging to non-Jews, or must it forever abandon the claim that they can be democratic, and progressive, while being a Jewish state.

The two-state solution had provided Israel and its supporters with an alibi to avoid these questions, but with the collapse of that solution, the questions come back with greater persistence. To be sure, Israel continues outwardly to hold most of the cards: It controls all the disputed land, from the river to the sea. Its military and technological dominance is vastly superior to that of the Palestinians and all the Arab nations combined—and promises to continue to be so in the foreseeable future. Its economic power and domination of the land is unquestioned. The Palestinian people are in disarray, their leadership weakened and co-opted, their communities fragmented and physically separated by walls, fences, checkpoints, and exile. No effective local or international challenge to their supremacy is seriously mounted, and if that were not sufficient, they enjoy the unquestioning support of the world's only superpower.

Yet Israel knows its situation is fragile and unsustainable. At best, it can only be maintained by continued brute military power, and lacks any moral or legal sustainability. To maintain it, they must employ and insist on measures that are racist, discriminatory, undemocratic, and oppressive. While such measures in the past were justified as temporary security measures necessitated by ongoing hostilities, they are now increasingly shown to be permanent integral requirements of Zionism and the ideology of a Jewish state.

The question now is whether Israelis and Palestinians can identify core interests (for each community) that need to be met, but which can be reached without negating the other side entirely. I believe such an exercise is possible and useful. Totally apart from whether or how we can reach such a solution, I believe it is imperative to begin to identify the elements that each side would consider irreducible and non-negotiable, but which still leave enough room for the other side, and to map out a vision that is worth dreaming about and working towards.

At the core of this exercise is the belief that democracy is

Resistance

not limited to the principle of "one person/one vote," where the majority can determine everything, even to the detriment of substantial minorities. No democracy can truly survive unless all its citizens, including substantial minorities feel sufficiently protected and invested in the state that they view as their own even though they are in the minority. We need to envision a state for all its citizens that addresses their needs and desires. Citizens of such a state will no longer feel alienated, or be viewed as a "demographic threat." In such a state, neither the birth rate of one group, their right of return, or the immigration statistics constitute a devastating existential threat. Both groups can feel confident and satisfied that their core interests will be preserved regardless of numerical fluctuations.

What, then, are the essential elements for each community in such a state?

For Palestinians, statehood may not be a nonnegotiable demand. After all, Palestinians want a state, primarily to provide them with certain rights and protections and as a vehicle for identity and self-government, which may be achieved by other means as well. Palestinians, however, will insist on genuine equality, and an absence of discrimination by the majority group. The State of Israel has had a poor record of providing such equality to its own Arab citizens, who have the formal vote, but who have been effectively frozen out of all public affairs through a variety of schemes. The new state must provide genuine equality to all its citizens. This equality needs to be guaranteed by constitutional provisions and embedded in structures that are not subject to the caprice of a parliamentary majority.

Such provisions are equally important to Jews in a democratic society to ensure that their core rights and values will not be eroded or eliminated by demographic shifts that will make them a minority at some point.

For Zionists, the right of return (*Aliyah*) for any Jew at any time to their state is fundamental and non-negotiable. The new state can still enshrine such a goal, but must balance it with the right of return (*Awdah*) for all Palestinians as well. If Jews can claim a Right of Return after 2000 years, it makes no sense to deny that right to Palestinians who had been living in this land a few decades ago, and who still keep the physical keys to their houses in their possession.

The issue of equal access to national resources, lands, water rights, housing, and jobs is equally important. It must

Bashir Abu-Rabia | Courtesy of Zawyeh Gallery

be intentionally and actively guaranteed. While one group maintained historically better abilities to access these resources, such privilege cannot be legally sanctioned, but must depend on merit. Towards that end, positions of power, such as Heads of Ministries, must be balanced by mandating that deputies of each minister must belong to the other group to prevent the possibility of discrimination by a majority in power against numerical minorities.

One exception to this rule may be the Ministry of Defense. For a number of historical and psychological reasons, the top 4 or 5 positions in the Army could be guaranteed to Jews, as well as the Defense Ministry, provided that all other positions in the Army be strictly filled on the basis of merit alone, and that any citizen, Arab or Jew, will have the option of refusing military service for reasons of conscience.

Furthermore, in light of the bitter recent history, and to provide better security for all citizens, a Ministry of Tolerance, with a budget of 10 percent of the Defense budget, will be charged with the task of actively promoting the history, language, and culture of each community, to the other community, and to promote joint activities between them. This will provide far more personal security than additional tens of billions of weapons can provide. In this manner, the overwhelming interest in security which fueled the Zionist movement and which many consider as non-negotiable can be adequately addressed.

The role of religion in public affairs should also be reexamined: Calling for Israel to be more Jewish, or for Palestine to be more Islamic seems to be a dangerous position that negates and undermines the Other. This is felt directly in the field of laws pertaining to individuals. Currently, personal status issues like marriage, divorce, adoption, and inheritance, are in the exclusive domain of each community's religious courts. This leads to grave injustices to the rights of communities whose religion or denomination is not recognized by the State. In Israel, as well as the territories it controls, this includes Reform and Conservative Jews, as well as evangelical Christians, and some of the smaller Moslem sects, as well as all secular individuals and those with mixed marriages. The new state will need a proper modern progressive civil law to govern these and all other personal status matters of these disenfranchised communities, while leaving to those who voluntarily want to submit to the jurisdiction of their own religious courts the freedom to do so. This is different from trying to impose religious rules by the majority (whoever they are) on others against their will. One can argue that this may well be a truly Jewish as well as human value, and if the new unitary state adopts such an approach, it will be truly a light to the surrounding nations, many of whom are also equally bound by the same Ottoman Millet system, of religious courts.

The flag, anthem, and national symbols of the new state must be altered to reflect its pluralistic and bi-national character. The President of Israel recently stated that he understood why non-Jewish citizens of Israel have a problem with the "Hatikva" since no "Jewish breath" beats within their breast."

The idea is not at all to deny the Jewish connections to the Land, but to recognize that such connections are not exclusive, and that Palestinians, both Christian and Moslem, also have connections and identify with the Land.

The changes and arrangements that will safeguard the interests of both groups must be enshrined in constitutional documents that are structurally fortified against shifting parliamentary majorities and transient public sentiments. This may be done by requiring super majorities in parliament for altering them, as well as by the creation of a constitutional court, with at least two justices from each community (out of 5) whose decisions must be taken by at least four members. This way a minority can be assured that the arrangement cannot be altered by the other group.

We also must recognize that significant outside players have a stake in the new state as well. For religious reasons alone, Jerusalem, and the rest of the country are of vital interest to Jews, Moslems, and Christians throughout the world. Both Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs are both heavily reliant upon, and continue to have strong ties with, outside parties. Furthermore, normalization of relationships between them will certainly remove a major irritant that has been a significant contributor to all the turmoil in the region, as well as to the West's relations with the Islamic world. In this sense, an arrangement that guarantees the basic core needs of both parties can be supported and guaranteed by major outside powers as well.

Few examples exist where such arrangements have worked in other parts of the world, yet many examples exist to show that failure to address the needs of significant minorities has resulted in calls for secession, as well as civil war, and prolonged enmity and strife. Especially where the ideals of democracy, modernity, human rights, and freedoms are valued, no long-term denial of such rights can be sustained. Thinking of a joint future for Palestinians and Israeli Jews requires imagination, thinking out of the box, and creativity. It also requires the willingness to put aside traditional concepts that have been overtaken by reality. One Palestinian artist who managed to make this leap was Kamal Boullata, who wrote:

> There is no return to my mother's womb. My mother is behind me, My Beloved is before me.
> There is no return to Palestine. My Palestine is no longer behind me, it lies Before me.
> Together the Winged Horse rises with us in our onward upward night journey
> And the Path begins with a single dot. ■

50 Years Later—How the Occupation Evolved and the Answer to its Growth

BY SAMI AWAD

I WAS BORN IN 1971, four years after the 1967 war that led to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. I grew up living under the brutality of the Israeli military and its violence. Until 1993 we, Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, lived under what I refer to as "direct military occupation." The military was fully present and controlling of every aspect of our lives. The military headquarters, known ironically as the "Civil Administration," were located in the heart of every major city in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Physically, the Israeli army roamed the streets of our villages, refugee camps, and cities day and night. Military bases and lookout locations were everywhere. Getting stopped for random checks, beatings, insults, being detained, was as normal of an experience as going to the nearby grocery store.

Intellectually, the Israeli military controlled all books and publications, monitoring every single publication that came from aboard, opening every letter and envelope; school curriculum was reviewed and censored by the Israeli military, and the only Palestinian newspapers that existed were censored by Israeli intelligence. A cousin of mine who worked for one of the local newspapers used to bring us articles he wrote where over 50 percent of the piece would have been marked as unprintable. If we wanted to listen to or see any news in Arabic, the only choice was Israeli government news on Israeli government radio and television.

Politically, any statement, slogan, sign, or even gesture that spoke of Palestinian nationalism, resistance, human rights, etc. was reason enough for a prison sentence (administrative detention, still used today, gives permission to the Israeli military to detain a Palestinian for up to six months, renewed, without trial or visitation from a lawyer). Economically, all tax money went to the Israeli military to sustain and maintain the Occupation—it was taxation without representation in its most brutal form. Legally, our status, even if our family existed in this land for hundreds of years, was labeled "resident" which gave legal rights to the Israeli military to revoke such status any time it chose to and to deny thousands the right to live here or return to their homes. As a student in the U.S., I had to renew my "residency right" every year or I lost it.

Freedom of assembly, freedom to elect your own leaders, freedom of expression, and every basic freedom that is cherished as nonnegotiable in the civil world was denied for Palestinians living under this direct military occupation.

This form of occupation remained intact until 1993 when to the surprise of many, the announcement of a peace process between the government of Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization was declared. The Oslo Peace Process promised both nations peace and security in a framework known as the two-state solution. The great majority on both sides celebrated Oslo and what it promised but very quickly the reality of a different outcome began to seep in.

While leaders from both sides were talking peace, the reality on the ground was different. The process was not ending the Occupation but reshaping and restructuring it. The Palestinian Authority was created by the Peace Process and the administrative daily responsibilities were handed over to it. This hand-over of responsibility and high maintenance cost (education, security, social welfare, healthcare, public sector salaries, infrastructure, etc.) took place mainly in the highly populated areas in the West Bank (approximately 15 percent of the total West Bank land area). This procedure shifted daily responsibilities to the Palestinians but maintained the

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Olivia Wise | Olivia Wise Illustration

overall control of the Israeli military and government especially when it came to significant issues such as land, water, borders, Jerusalem, movement, etc. As important, the cost of this new form of occupation was significantly less than the old form. The Israeli army now only had to maintain checkpoints and army lookout locations.

Whether intentional or not, the Palestinian movement for resistance and liberation changed and became a movement of governance and maintaining political and economic structures. The main goal became maintaining the authority. Ministries and bureaucracies were created to take over the matters of daily life of the Palestinian community. The Occupation established itself much stronger in areas that were not under the Palestinian Authority's control; building and expanding settlements, controlling water resources, limiting (sometimes restricting) freedom of movement within the West Bank, let alone to Jerusalem and inside Israel, and controlling the flow of everything and everyone coming in and out of the "territories." This led to greater economic dependency on Israel through its control of tax returns on imports and the high number of day laborers working in Israel itself.

The new reality of the Occupation has made it almost impossible to envision a two-state solution based on the Oslo framework. It is not impossible due to the practicality of it, which is a big challenge by itself, but more because of the lack of intention by the Israeli leadership (left or right) to truly make it happen. The Palestinian leadership, for the most part, still sees this possibility even though it is losing more and more ground in the community itself.

As the Occupation evolves the response to it has to also evolve, especially the level of envisioning what the end will look like. Until the Oslo Peace Process era, the Occupation was seen as a foreign colonialist power controlling a people and a land who are struggling to end the colonial regime and send it back home, a situation similar to the Indian liberation movement. Today, the Occupation is more similar to the South African model, where it is a people who claim historic roots or at least no other home, take over control of the entire land and limit most of its other ethnic and religious population from having similar equal rights. It is a new type of self-governing Bantustans setting.

The uniqueness of many of the South African black leadership was that their commitment to their homeland (their

> **The Occupation still exists and the suffering continues. Fifty years later is time for real lessons to be learned and new paradigms to be created.**

nation) was greater than that to commitment to having their political identity recognized. The struggle, as challenging and difficult as it was, was to demand equal rights in South Africa, fully accepting and recognizing the rights of the historic suppressor to also live there. They did not accept the multi-state political solution that was offered to them.

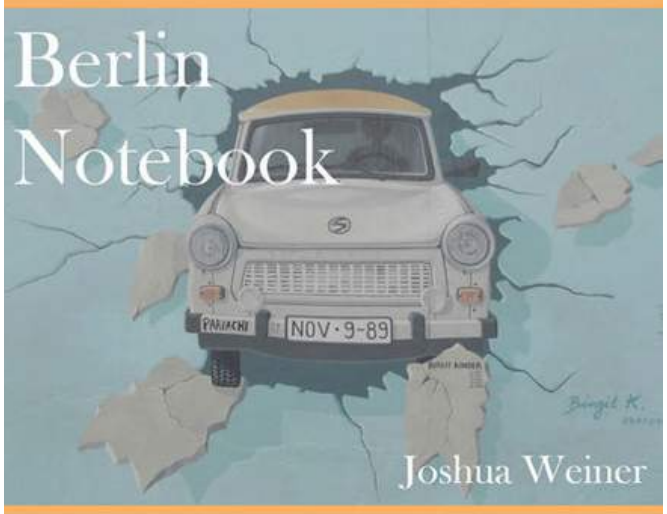
The Palestinian leadership and people, as well as the Israeli ones, need to dismiss fully the colonialist mindset of the other and the self and who has or does not have the right to live here. This does not mean an immediate shift to a one-state solution, as some are suggesting, but a shift to a new process that aims mainly at dismantling structures of racism and suppression towards the other through nonviolent activism, beginning with building mutual relationships of trust and respect between the two nations, allowing a space for unique identities of the land to flourish independently (even through nation-state frameworks), and most importantly recognizing the full equal right of all the people to the entire land, especially in honoring their religious, cultural, and social heritage.

The Occupation still exists and the suffering continues. Fifty years later it is time for real lessons to be learned and new paradigms to be created. To remain on this path of thinking that peace in the Holy Land is just about finding ways to fix Oslo and keep renegotiating it until it happens is not only insane, but dangerous to all the people of this land. We need a leadership on both sides that is ready to truly sacrifice this notion of the past in order to build a new vision for the future. ■

Joshua Weiner

"There will be plenty of earnest 'news' stories about the situation of Syrian refugees in Europe and particularly, Berlin; but none of them will come close to the wide-ranging speculations and reportage of Josh Weiner. His unique perspective on the refugees' individual lives reflects not only their daily dilemmas inside a vast, and often torturously slow bureaucracy, but their personal sense of their own fate and what they hope for the future. This is a brilliant and lasting amalgam of history, personal interviews, literary speculation, and vivid description of what day to day life actually feels like for every part of Berlin society, including those who work for the welfare of the new comers, and those who are on the march to keep them out."

—Tom Sleigh



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The United States and Israel

An Alliance or a Protection Racket?

BY STEPHEN ZUNES

Given the centuries of persecution against the Jewish people, threats by Arab neighbors to Israel's very survival in the early days of its independence, and decades of terrorist attacks by Palestinian extremists against Israeli civilians, it has been understandably difficult for many Israelis to recognize the willingness of the Palestine Authority (PA) to make peace.

As the principal mediator in the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, one would think that the United States would be eager to underscore the Authority's willingness to accept Israeli control of 78 percent of historic Palestine, allow for Israeli annexation of most of the major settlement blocs in the West Bank in exchange for an equivalent amount of land recognized as part of Israel, and the implantation of strict security guarantees, including the demilitarization of a Palestinian state, the disarming of Hamas and other militias, and the deployment of Israeli monitors and international peacekeeping forces.

Unfortunately, the U.S. government and leading American political figures have done just the opposite—engaging in a longstanding and persistent effort to persuade the Israeli people and supporters of Israel in the United States that the Palestinians are not really interested in peace and that a perpetually militarized Israel is therefore necessary.

In resolutions passed by unanimous consent or lopsided bipartisan majorities, Congress has repeatedly tried to convince Israelis that—despite repeated calls for peace—the Palestinians' recognized leadership in the dominant Fatah party, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and the Palestine Authority have actually wanted to destroy Israel. For example, Congressional leaders and top administration officials from both parties for many years kept insisting that Palestinian leaders such as Yasir Arafat and Mahmoud Abbas were talking about peace in English while rejecting it in Arabic—even though none of them actually understood the language. Terrorist attacks by Abu Nidal, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and other extremist Palestinian groups were falsely attributed to the PLO or the PA. Statements by Palestinian leaders have been repeatedly taken out of context to make them sound threatening, such as claiming that calls for a "jihad"—the Arabic word for "struggle"—in support of Palestinian independence meant a call for war to destroy Israel, or that praise by Palestinian leaders of "martyrs" killed in unarmed protests against the Israeli Occupation were actually referring to suicide bombers.

While the original PLO Charter called for the end of Israel as a Jewish state, this clause was made moot in a series of policy shifts by the PLO leadership in the 1980s, codified in the Oslo Accords of 1993, and formally repealed by the Palestine National Congress—with the full satisfaction of the Israeli government—in 1996, a decision reiterated by the Palestinian parliament two years later in the presence of President Bill Clinton. Yet a number of prominent members of Congress still claim to this day that the Palestinian Charter still calls for Israel's destruction.

The Myth of Palestinian Rejection of Peace with Israel

During the summer of 2000, the Clinton Administration unsuccessfully attempted to forge a final peace agreement between the two sides at a summit in Camp David. President Clinton's insistence to then jump to final status negotiations without prior confidence-building measures, such as a freeze on new Israeli settlements or the fulfillment of previous pledges to withdraw from certain areas of the West Bank, led the Palestinians to question the sincerity of both Israel and the United States. Despite Palestinian objections, Clinton insisted that the two parties come to Maryland anyway to try to hammer out a final agreement. President Arafat pleaded that they needed more time, but Clinton pushed him to come and try anyway, promising "If it fails, I will not blame you."

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However, not only did Clinton put enormous pressure on Arafat to accept the Israeli proposals, he did indeed blame Arafat for the collapse of the talks when the Palestinian leader rejected Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak's peace proposals on the grounds that they fell way short of Israel's obligations under international law, and divided the West Bank into four noncontiguous cantons in which Israel would be able to restrict movement between the cantons and neighboring Arab countries, as well as control the airspace and water resources of the new Palestinian "state." At the news conference at the close of the talks, Clinton declared that "Prime Minister Ehud Barak showed particular courage, vision, and an understanding of the historical importance of the moment" while insisting that it was Arafat who had been unwilling to compromise. Clinton also declared on Israeli television that the Israeli prime minister "was more creative and more courageous" than Arafat.

Though Israel presented no maps to show precisely what lands they were including in the offer, U.S. officials insisted that Barak was willing to hand over a full 95 percent or more of the West Bank back to the Palestinians, including a capital in East Jerusalem. In reality, this widely quoted percentage did not include greater East Jerusalem (which had been illegally annexed by Israel years earlier), much of the Jordan Valley, the Dead Sea coast, and parts of the Judean Desert, which Barak insisted be leased to the Israeli military for exclusive use for an indefinite period. Taking these additional areas into account, this offer totaled only slightly more than 80 percent of the West Bank, and the proposed "Palestinian capital in East Jerusalem" was actually Abu Dis, a West Bank village on the city's outskirts.

Following the end of the Camp David summit, the White House leaked a series of accusations that Arafat lacked flexibility and was responsible for the breakdown of talks. According to Palestinian negotiator Nabil Shaath, "I personally pleaded with President Clinton: 'Please do not put on a sad face and tell the world it failed. Please say we broke down taboos, dealt with the heart of the matter and will continue.' But then the president started the blame game, and he backed Arafat into a corner."

Such disappointment over Clinton's role was shared by Israeli negotiator Shlomo Ben-Ami, who noted, "At the end of Camp David, we had the feeling that the package as such contained ingredients and needed to go on. But Clinton left us to our own devices after he started the blame game."

In October of that year, the U.S. House of Representatives, with only 30 dissenting votes, adopted a bipartisan resolution claiming that Israel had "expressed its readiness to take wide-ranging and painful steps in order to bring an end to the conflict, but these proposals were rejected by Chairman Arafat." To this day, members of Congress continue to distort what was really offered at Camp David. Typical are remarks of House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi, who insisted that Barak had made "a generous and historic proposal," a claim reiterated by Hillary Clinton as recently as April of last year. Senate Intelligence Committee chair Dianne Feinstein claimed the Israelis offered "97 percent of the territory of the West Bank [and] a Palestinian capital in East Jerusalem, . . . [but that] Arafat rejected everything that was asked of him." Subsequently, President George W. Bush claimed that Arafat "had a chance to secure the peace as a result of the hard work of president Clinton, and he didn't." Democratic Congressman Howard Berman, chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, claimed that Arafat's rejection of Barak's proposal was indicative of the Palestinians' determination "to destroy Israel."

Despite such efforts to convince the Israelis that the Palestinians were not interested in peace, negotiations continued, with more than fifty meetings in subsequent months. Talks in Taba, Egypt in January 2001 came very close to an agreement, but the election of the right-wing Ariel Sharon as Israel's new prime minister put an end to the formal talks.

In December of 2003, a comprehensive peace plan supported by the Palestinian leadership and leading Israeli moderates based upon the Taba talks was signed in Geneva. The unofficial agreement negotiated outside of either government allowed Israel to annex some blocs of settlements along Israel's internationally recognized borders in exchange for an equivalent amount of Israeli territory that would be granted to the new Palestinian state. The agreement provided strict security guarantees for Israel and no right of return for Palestinian refugees. Public opinion polls showed that a majority of Israelis, Palestinians, and Americans—including a majority of American Jews—supported the outline of the Geneva agreement. However, both Congress and the Bush administration ignored it.

Four months later, the Bush administration—along with an overwhelming bipartisan majority of Congress—endorsed a counter-proposal by Sharon in which Israel would withdraw from its illegal settlements in the Gaza Strip while annexing large sections of the West Bank, incorporating virtually all of the illegal settlements into Israel, leaving the Palestinians with a series of noncontiguous and economically unviable cantons, each surrounded by Israeli territory, collectively constituting barely 10 percent of historic Palestine.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi declared Sharon's proposal as a "courageous" and "gut-wrenching" decision for Israel, while the Bush administration insisted that the lack of a favorable Palestinian response was indicative of a lack of interest in peace. President Bush and an overwhelming bipartisan majority of Congress declared that "the United States will do its utmost to prevent any attempt by anyone to impose any other plan," an apparent reference to the Geneva proposal from the previous December.

More recently, Congress and the Obama administration began insisting that the PA's recognition of Israel and offers

of security guarantees is not enough. Washington started demanding that the Palestinians explicitly recognize Israel as a "Jewish state." Never before had the United States put forward such a requirement. President Carter never made such demands of Egypt nor did President Clinton require this of Jordan as a condition for their peace treaties with Israel. Indeed, never in history has any country been required to recognize the ethnic or religious identity of another state as a condition for peace. President Abbas has stated that Israel can identify itself however it wants, but—given that 20 percent of the Israeli population is ethnically Palestinian Arab—it would be politically impossible to agree to something that would acknowledge second-class status for other Palestinians.

Moving the goalposts in such a way proved to be quite convenient for the Obama administration in assigning blame for the failure of Secretary of State John Kerry's 2015 peace offensive. The Netanyahu government rejected most of the administration's key proposals while the PA agreed to all of them—except for the new demand that they recognize Israel as a "Jewish state." As a result, Secretary Kerry could then declare that "both sides" had refused to make the necessary compromises for peace.

This has also enabled Washington to conflate Palestinian refusal to formally recognize Israel as a Jewish state with refusal to recognize Israel. Indeed, leading members of Congress have repeated the line that "the Palestinian Authority refuses to recognize the Jewish State of Israel"—thereby implying non-recognition of the country itself—and State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki defended Israel's decision to suspend peace talks in April of 2014 by saying, "It's hard to see how Israel can be expected to negotiate with a government that does not believe in its right to exist."

"Incitement"

Washington has long tried to convince Israelis that Palestinian violence comes not as a result of occupation and colonization of Palestinian lands, but "incitement" by the Palestine Authority.

For example, Senator Hillary Clinton pushed through a resolution claiming that the PA published textbooks promoting "anti-Semitism," "violence," and "dehumanizing rhetoric" and thereby breeds a "new generation of terrorists." On several occasions she has blamed this alleged anti-Semitic indoctrination for Palestinian violence. The only source she has cited to uphold these charges, however, has been the Center for Monitoring the Impact of Peace (CMIP), a right-wing group based in Israel whose board includes Daniel Pipes and other prominent American neoconservatives founded in 1998 as part of an effort to undermine the peace process by attempting to portray the Palestinians as hopelessly hostile to Israel's existence.

$3.8 billion
U.S. aid to Israel annually

80%
Percentage of that aid which goes to U.S. arms manufacturers and other U.S. corporations

1
Number of United Nations Security Council resolutions critical of Israel allowed to pass by President Obama during his eight years in office

21
Number of United Nations Security Council resolutions critical of Israel allowed to pass by President Reagan during his eight years in office

5
Number of Russian vetoes to prevent passage of UN Security Council resolutions involving Syria

42
Number of U.S. vetoes to prevent passage of UN Security Council resolutions involving Israel

73%
Percentage of Israelis who favored withdrawing from Lebanon while the U.S. government opposed Israeli withdrawal (1999)

61%
Percentage of Israelis who supported a Palestinian state alongside Israel prior to the U.S. government supporting Palestinian statehood (1999)

26%
Percentage of Americans who support U.S. pledge to veto a possible UN resolution endorsing Palestinian statehood

CMIP's claims have long since been refuted in a detailed report commissioned by the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv through the Jerusalem-based Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information (IPCRI), which—in reviewing Palestinian textbooks and tolerance education programs—noted that while the textbooks do not openly or adequately reflect the multiethnic, multicultural, and multi-religious history of the region, "The overall orientation of the curriculum is peaceful," and they "do not openly incite against Israel and the Jews and do not openly incite hatred and violence." It goes on to observe how religious and political tolerance is emphasized. Similar conclusions have been reached in surveys from the Adam Institute, the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*, as well as a study by Nathan Brown, Professor of Political Science at George Washington University and Senior Associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Despite this, Clinton reiterated her claim of "incitement in Palestinian textbooks and schools" as late as November 2015. The insistence by the 2016 Democratic presidential nominee and other U.S. political leaders on repeating long-discredited claims by a right-wing organization rather than recognizing the conclusions of detailed investigations by credible scholars and journalists fits the pattern of dismissing the well-documented ways in which the ongoing Occupation has provoked Palestinian extremism.

Indeed, in November 2015, a House resolution passed by unanimous consent declared that a recent wave of random knife attacks by individual Palestinians was due to anti-Semitic hatred and "incitement" by President Abbas and the Palestine Authority, which they claim "has continued unabated for many years." This came despite top Israeli security officials going on record just days earlier that the spasm of assaults by Palestinians that fall was a result of the ongoing Occupation and violence by Israeli soldiers and settlers. Such analysis is largely rejected in Washington, however, with Congressional leaders like Pelosi continuing to insist that the conflict is about the Palestinians' alleged refusal to recognize "the fundamental right of Israel to exist" and asserting that the violence has anything do to with the Occupation is "absolute nonsense."

It has been this continued bipartisan insistence that the Palestinian leadership is not interested in peace and still wants to destroy Israel that has been a major factor in Israel's shift to the right in recent years, as it effectively reinforces the Likud narrative that territorial compromise will not lead to peace and that continued repression and colonization must therefore continue. It reinforces deep-seated and widely-held fears by Israelis that the actual Palestinian goal is simply to destroy Israel and kill the Jews.

During the 1990s, increasing numbers of Israelis had finally begun to show an openness to making peace with the Palestinians. However, in publicly assuming the worst of intentions by the Palestinians, American political leaders have helped reverse this dovish trend and encourage the ascendency of Israeli hardliners.

What might motivate both Republicans and Democrats to undermine Israeli progressives and moderates and encourage Israeli militarists, expansionists, and the nationalist right? Part of it could be the same rigid ideological assumptions that led to bipartisan exaggerations of the "Soviet threat" during the Cold War and subsequent obsessions with Islamist terrorism. However, sabotaging the chances for Israeli-Palestinian peace—whether by accident or design—also has practical advantages for U.S. designs in that strategic region.

If Israelis are convinced by U.S. insistence that peace is impossible, Israel has to maintain its dependent relationship with the United States, continue receiving billions of dollars' worth of American military hardware annually, and strengthen strategic cooperation. By undermining any possibility of Palestinian self-determination, even on a bare one-fifth of their country, violence and unrest will continue for many years to come. Combined with highly-profitable arms sales to various Arab dictatorships and the ongoing rejection by Washington of regional arms control initiatives, weapons transfers to Israel will continue to increase despite Israel's overwhelmingly dominant military position, thereby solidifying Israel's role as—in the words of one former U.S. Secretary of State—America's "unsinkable aircraft carrier."

If the United States was really interested in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Washington would recognize the PA's willingness to make peace and insist that Israel respond in kind, including supporting proposals to enforce an agreement along the lines of the Taba and Geneva negotiations through the use of Chapter VII of the UN Charter. Rather than promoting peace, however, the United States has pursued a Pax Americana, continuing the divide-and-rule strategy that Western colonial powers have imposed on the Middle East for centuries. This is nothing less than a protection racket, encouraging policies that leave Israelis more vulnerable to violence and thereby in constant need of U.S. military "support" and "strategic cooperation."

It is time to reject the myth that U.S. policy is "pro-Israel." It is not. It is a policy that promotes the most racist, militaristic, and chauvinistic elements in Israeli society, the victims of which will not just be the Palestinians and other Arabs, but ultimately Israel itself. ■

Atzma'ut 69, Occupation 50

Does That Add Up?

BY ARTHUR WASKOW

For Israel, this summer marks the 50th anniversary (June 10, 2017) of the end of the Six-Day War and the beginning of the Israeli Occupation of the Palestinian West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza.

And that historical marker quickly follows another one: the 69th anniversary of Israel's statehood, commemorated by Israelis as *Yom Ha'Atzma'ut* (May 1 and 2).

Yom Ha'Atzma'ut is usually translated as "Israeli Independence Day." That English word means "not hanging on." But the Hebrew would be more accurately translated as "Day for Standing on One's Own Feet, Day of Affirming One's Own Essence" *(Etzem*, the linguistic root of "*atzma'ut,*" means "bone, skeleton, internal essential structure.")

From that deeper perspective, the 50th anniversary of the Occupation casts a deep pall of doubt upon the 69th birthday of the State. Has Israel really been independently "standing on its own feet" or has it for five-sevenths of its history been simultaneously standing in military boots on a subjugated people and depending (not "independing") on the military and money support of the United States government to do so?

The present Israeli government, elected just two years ago, is by far the most right-wing—politically, economically, and religiously—in Israel's history. It has taken many steps to set in steel and stone its Occupation of the only land on which a self-determining peaceful Palestinian state could be built. Yet till very recently a majority of Israelis (and Palestinians) still looked wistfully toward liberating both peoples by negotiating a secure and peaceful Palestine into existence alongside a secure and peaceful Israel.

"Till very recently?" Till the election of Donald Trump to the U.S. presidency and his appointment of David Friedman as Ambassador to Israel—a religiously and politically ultra-right-wing Jew who does not even dissemble his hostility to Palestinian statehood alongside Israel and who sneers at and slanders Jews who do support that vision. Possibly a majority of Israelis and Palestinians still share that vision, but if U.S. power is mobilized against it, what hope can there be of achieving it?

Now, Sheldon Adelson, funder of both the Israeli and the American racist heads of state, stands like the Colossus in a trans-Atlantic Roman Empire—one leg perched on the White House and the other on Herod's throne in Jerusalem.

The one hope we can glean from the erection of that Billionaire Colossus is the clarity of the need to tear it down. Until the moment of Friedman's appointment, U.S. governmental support of the Occupation had masked itself behind querulous complaints. Now it is clear, and the clarity should call forth a demand for U.S. commitment not merely to complain about the Occupation, but to end it.

Since the State of Israel claims to be "the Jewish State," and since its actions certainly affect the world's understanding of the Jewish people (and for many Jews, our understanding of ourselves), it is hard for Jews anywhere to ignore the meaning of this 50th anniversary. Since I have invested my own life in drawing upon the past wisdom of the Jewish people, shaping its present, and transforming its future, I certainly cannot ignore these events.

In this I am hardly alone. There have been myriad analyses and essays about both the last Israeli election and the last U.S. election, and about the governments emerging from them both. Both are now committed to impose settlements on Palestinian land that will make a viable Palestine impossible.

Almost all these analyses have focused on the political implications—for Israel, for Palestine, for the Middle East, for the United States.

I feel drawn to think and feel in a different dimension. So what I have written below looks into the moral and spiritual meaning of the election in the light of Torah. What is the meaning of the Yom ha'Atzma'ut we have recently passed? What *is* our own essence, what are the feet of our own on which we might hope to stand?

So I raise these questions:

- Israel is also the name of a people. What does it mean, deeply and fully, for the People, as well as the State, to be named "Yisrael" or "Godwrestlers"?
- What have been the different effects of post-Holocaust-traumatic-stress on Israeli and American Jewry?

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Despair and Hope | Shafik Radwan | Courtesy of Zawyeh Gallery

- Why does the Torah repeat so many times the command, "Treat strangers with justice and love, for you were strangers in the Narrow Land (Egypt)"?
- What are the relationships among respect, love, and idolatry directed toward the State? What actually happened in the 2015 elections and negotiations toward choosing a new government? The Israeli electorate—especially the majority of its Jewish majority—voted for an extremist right-wing government. Its victory, though hair-thin, makes visible three sides of the State: Increasing impulses among its Jewish citizens toward repression of Palestinians, the poor, and human rights groups that criticize this repressive urge. The existence of another large part of the Jewish citizenry, mostly confused and only semi-coherent, always thwarted, wistfully wishing for peace with a Palestinian state, equality for non-Orthodox expressions of Judaism, and far greater support for the poor. Greater political adeptness among the one-fifth of Israeli citizens who are of Palestinian origin and culture, who are formally tolerated in the political system but held at 20 cubits' distance from actually exercising political power. And among the Palestinians under siege in Gaza, under Occupation in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, a baffled rage and a constant sense of humiliation that occasionally burst out into acts of terrorism.

These developments raise not only a political issue but an ethical issue—a moral issue, a Torah issue.

I. The Godwrestling People

We must remember that there is an "Israel" broader than the State. "Israel" is also the name of a People.

And we must renew for ourselves the meaning of calling ourselves the People Israel.

That name comes from one of the crucial stories in the Bible. It was the story of our ancestor Jacob. His name meant "heel," and he was indeed a heel—a sneak, a greedy grabber, a liar, a thief.

But at a crucial moment in his life, he was moved by fear of the brother he had cheated and by guilt for his own behavior to turn from struggling against his brother to wrestling with the God Who, he felt, had shaped his world into impossibility.

"Why," he demanded, "was I caught in the trap in which to become the person I truly needed and intended to become, I had to lie and cheat? Why was the universe set up that way?"

To raise that question meant to wrestle God. And from that wrestle he rose with a new name: "Yisra'el," or in English "Israel," "Godwrestler."

Once "Jacob" had become the Godwrestler, he was able to feel compassion for the brother he had feared, and he was able to inspire compassion from the brother he had robbed. That moment opened up for us the possibility of a new kind of peoplehood.

For more than two millennia, we have called ourselves the Godwrestling folk. At this crucial moment in our lives, we need to turn away from robbing our Palestinian cousins and lying to ourselves. We need instead to wrestle with the God Who offers us a choice: On the one hand, the trap of being the liar, the robber, the oppressor; on the other hand, the open path of freedom.

> "*Min hameytzar karati Yahh; anani ba'merchav Yahh.* From the Narrow Place I cried out to You, the Breath of Life; You breathed back into me the breath of broad and open possibility." (Psalm 118)

First we need to cry out, to Wrestle and take the chance, even the likelihood, of being wounded as our forebear was. From knowing our own wound, learning to know the pain of others who are wounded. Becoming the Wounded Healer, not the heel.

In the last Israeli election, the majority of the Jewish majority chose to betray its own name and to act like the Heel Jacob rather than the compassionate Godwrestler. They chose the moral and ethical disaster of choosing an Israeli government that acted even before the election with contempt and venom toward the Palestinian people.

Since in that election and beyond, the State called "Israel" betrayed its name, the People Israel must renew its meaning.

We must begin with both compassion and firm correction for our brother "Jacob."

II: Compassion for both the "Us" and the "Other"

The Torah insists 36 times that we must act justly, compassionately, or even lovingly toward the "foreigner" among us—because we know what it was like to be foreigners, slaves, and pariahs under Pharaoh in the Land of Narrowness.

The repetition of the command so many times points to its surpassing importance. But it also points to something else: The command had to be repeated so often because the people were ignoring it, and instead were taking the oppressive experience of slavery under Pharaoh as a reason to press down anyone who might conceivably endanger them. Taking their painful experience as a reason to raise their fists, saying: "Never again—for us!"

We know that this is indeed one response of those who are suffering from post-traumatic stress or from having been abused: reenact the abuse on others.

And that is the response that is poisoning the heritage of the Holocaust in the culture that has powerfully shaped and been shaped by the Jews who are citizens of Israel.

The Torah reminds us again and again that even if we keep coming back again and again to this way of acting, it was and is a mistake. Morally, ethically, and practically, it is a mistake.

Compassion for the Traumatized Self

What to take away? Both compassion for the traumatized sufferers who out of trauma impose suffering on others, and insistence, as the Torah says, that this response is NOT wise, NOT permitted.

And here the wisdom of "Israel is the name of a People also" is important. For the two great Jewish communities on Earth have had very different social experiences during the last 70 years:

It is easy to see why many (not all) Jews of the State of Israel, at first surrounded by enemies, only slowly acclimated to the possibility of a chilly peace with their nearest neighbors, traumatized again and again by terrorist attacks, became unable to see their own role in the spiral of abuse. Unable to change their behavior. Unable to put down their fists and open their hands to those Palestinians and others in the neighboring peoples who were ready to clasp their hands in peace.

But the Jews of the United States have had a very different experience in the last 70 years. The Holocaust mattered to American culture, but in a different way. It so deeply horrified most Americans that it dried up almost all the anti-Semitism that had existed in the U.S. before World War II.

Until very recently—again that foreboding phrase!—we had been fully accepted into the American culture, economy, politics, and society. The Holocaust has played an important role in some aspects of American Jewish culture, but that role has been greatly softened by the experience of acceptance. There is far less post-traumatic stress among American Jews than among Israeli Jews.

However, Trump's campaign and victory unleashed a wave of anti-Semitic as well as anti-Islamic acts that have shocked many American Jews to ask for the first time in their lives whether they are safe.

Even so, American Jewry could—if we chose—speak with compassion and clarity to Israeli Jewry:

> "We understand your pain and fear, but *Es passt nicht*. This doesn't pass muster. It doesn't go. You must not behave that way.
>
> You must instead act justly, compassionately, even lovingly, toward those you think of as foreigners, strangers, pariahs."

Not just because Torah says so: for Torah says so because human experience, distilled and enriched through encounter with the ONE Who breathes all life, says that is far wiser than the traumatized response.

This attitude of "compassion and rebuke" also speaks to whether attempts to change Israeli government policy should adopt the position of the main committees calling for "BDS"—Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions—aimed at all of Israeli society. The main BDS committee also intends to continue BDS until Palestinian refugees from Israel and their millions of descendants can exercise their own right of return to what is now Israel.

I have had one strategic and two ethical objections to the campaign for total BDS. Strategically, I thought the energy spent on it by churches was far less effective than an all-out religious campaign to change U.S. government policy would have been. Ethically, though its eschewal of outright physical violence is a great advance over previous use by some Palestinian groups of murderous terrorism, I think it does not accord with "compassion and rebuke " because it defines all of Israeli society, even cultural institutions committed to support for peace with Palestine, as the oppressor, and because its "right of return" demand makes achieving a peace settlement impossible.

My strategic objection is now void because the Trumpist U.S. government has made clear there is no point in urging it to shift to an anti-Occupation U.S. policy. Ethically, I think a strong and focused campaign for laser-beam boycott and divestment aimed against direct involvement in the Occupation would embody "compassion and rebuke." That kind of laser-beam boycott policy is far more urgent now than before. Even ethically obligatory.

Forcing Narrowness upon American Jews

But at least till very recently, most American Jews were unable to face Israeli Jews squarely and speak that truth of "compassion and rebuke." And even now, most of the large organized structures of American Jewry are not only unwilling to say so, but are likely to expel from their midst American Jews who do say so.

Thus Hillel International, the organization intended to serve American Jewish college students, has imposed a set of political litmus tests on every local Hillel house on every campus. In doing so, it forces out of the Jewish community even—or especially! —those Jews who are not only the possible future, but are likely to be the most creative, the most lively, the most future-oriented.

And when some students responded by founding "Open Hillel," invoking the name and symbol of a great Jewish teacher known precisely for his openness to a wide range of ideas, Hillel International sued to prevent what it saw as a "trademark infringement."

This was not only an attempt at political oppression but an attempt at cultural kidnapping—annexing Hillel himself under State-of-Israel hegemony as if he were part of the West Bank. (As if George Washington University were to sue every business, every college, every street-naming town or city that named anything after President George Washington.)

III. The Deadly Danger of Idolatry

This kind of effort to squash a broad range of criticism of the State, to lift the State into sacrosanctity, has a Torah name: idolatry.

Qalandiya Checkpoint

Qalandiya Checkpoint | Nabil Anani | Courtesy of Zawyeh Gallery

The Ten Utterances of Sinai teach us that to carve out a piece of the Great Sacred Flow and bow down to that carved-out partial piece as if it were the Holy One is what it means to worship idols.

The Talmud tells a story about idolatry: Some of the rabbis went searching for the *yetzer hara,* the impulse toward evil, that breeds idolatry. They thought if they could find it, they could kill it—and thus end idolatry.

They hunted and hunted, and finally found it hiding.

Where? In the innermost sacred place, the Temple's Holy of Holies.

The story tells us it is easiest to turn something worthy and holy into an idol. Indeed, when the American Jewish "community"—that is, the organized structure—tries to make the State of Israel sacrosanct, it is turning its legitimate love and admiration for the Israel of 1948 into idolatry toward the Israel of 2017.

But the deepest Jewish wisdom is that idolatry kills:

> "The idols have noses but breathe not, eyes but see not, mouths but speak not, ears but hear not, hands but touch not, legs but journey not. Those who make them and those who put their trust in them become like them—dead. " (Psalm 115)

How do we distinguish between something worthy and something to be worshipped? Another Talmud story:

In the days when Rome ruled ancient Palestine, a Jew came to a Rabbi, saying "I have bought a home from a Roman. Behind the house is a pleasant pool of water, and at the water's edge there is a lovely statue of a woman. I think it may be the Venus whom some Romans worship. Is the statue an idol, so that I must destroy it?"

"It depends," said the Rabbi. "If the statue was sculpted to add more beauty to the pool, it is a sculpture merely: Enjoy its beauty. But if the pool was dug to celebrate and glorify the statue, then it is an idol and you must destroy it."

What is the State of Israel? Is it something we ourselves, the People Israel with the help of other nations, have sculpted, intending that it embody compassion and creativity? Then when some claim it fails to do so, when some critics say the hands have become fists or even that the whole design is

flawed, the sculptors must take the critique seriously. They must act to repair the flaws.

They must even open themselves to hearing those who say the sculpture's design is so flawed that it must be replaced with a new instrument for compassion and creativity.

The critics may be right or wrong. But they must be heard, and then we can make our judgment. Our judgment will be wiser if we listen.

To wall the critics out, even to say that some of them, nit-picking, are legitimate but others, more questioning of the root, are not—that is to put an impenetrable wall around our sculpture, to insist that all the pools of tears that have been shed for her are only forms of adoration. That makes the State into an idol. And idolatry kills. Godwrestling wounds, but idolatry kills.

And making the State of Israel into an idol is exactly what some American Jewish institutions are doing when they kneel before a President who appoints a white nationalist to be his chief strategist, when they turn their eyes away from that President's encouragement of not only Islamophobia and xenophobia but anti-Semitism—all for the sake of the Israeli Occupation.

We say the Occupation is not Jewish. They don't care—because it's not what is Jewish they support; they support the Occupation while they scorn what is most Jewish about the Jews. The newest version of right-wing anti-Semitism.

What then can we, must we, do?

The election and all that led up to it must not seduce us into despair, and not into a wistful empty-headed hope. We, the People Israel who are committed to wrestle with the God Who is the Breath of Life, must turn to do creative work.

The Israel of 1948, of the Declaration of Independence that foreswore racism and that chose democracy, may be dead. If so, it is not "despair" to sit *shiva* (seven days of mourning) for that state. Sitting *shiva* is an act of living. Something new can, must, will, be born through shiva—if we will it. "If we will it, it is no mere dream," as Herzl said about the State in the first place.

Grief is not the same as giving up. Shiva is not suicide.

We American Jews can see before us, in ourselves and in others, two models of how to live through a history far worse and far longer than the distortions and oppressions of the State of Israel—and how to live and work beyond that history.

1) The Godwrestling People Israel who suffered and died through the Holocaust were able to birth a vibrant State—the Israel of 1948—and a vibrant American Jewry.

2) African-Americans who suffered outright chattel slavery for 350 years and terrorism at the hands of the KKK for a century after that and the contempt of the Supreme Court of the United States all that time, from 1789 to at least 1954 (and perhaps once again right now) were able to transmute their suffering into "Go Down Moses" and "Go Tell It On the Mountain," the many forms of jazz, "I Have A Dream," a challenge to the "deadly triplets of racism, militarism, and materialism" (Martin Luther King's speech "Beyond Vietnam," at Riverside Church , April 4, 1967), and Black Lives Matter.

With models like this of transformative courage before our eyes, we should be able to imagine what to do to bring to birth a new version of the Godwrestling people.

Perhaps it means a spiritual-political alliance of American Jews, Muslims, and Christians to face down the domineering governments of Israel, Gaza, and the U.S. by invoking with active hope the Holy One Who is the Breath of Life and who as our traditions say renews life for the dead. How? By demanding the next U.S. government convene and chair an Emergency Conference on Peace in the Middle East, at which the U.S. resurrects from the dead the regional peace settlement proposed by the Arab League that includes a safe Israel and a free Palestine. By insisting the U.S. commit itself to use all America's influence to bring about that settlement.

Perhaps it means raising money for Israel and putting it in a special escrow fund till there is a two-state peace treaty, or a regional peace treaty that creates full recognition and safety for Israel with full recognition and freedom for Palestine. And demanding that the Jewish Federations in the U.S. do the same.

Perhaps it means deciding, as some Israelis, some Palestinians, and some American Jews have, that Israeli settlements on the West Bank have finally made it impossible to separate the two peoples into two states, and that instead the goal must be a democratic "Land of Abraham" from the River to the Sea.

Perhaps . . .

These suggestions are hints toward creativity. Hints toward wrestling. But only hints. They are suggestions for new tactics or new strategies toward a different future for Israel and Palestine.

Wrestling God/ History/ Reality

Beneath such suggestions must come the more radical question: Are we prepared to "wrestle God" as our forebear Jacob did, to challenge the structure of reality that seems to pin us in a self-destructive dilemma.

Are we willing to wrestle God's Own Self by asking: Does the fulfillment of our own sacred identity require us to rob our cousins and lie to ourselves? Is there no way beyond that destructive dilemma?

Our ancestor Jacob wrestled God's very Self to get beyond his own destructive dilemma, his own seemingly obdurate reality. Through that ultimate Wrestle, he turned himself from a robbing, lying Heel, to a compassionate Godwrestler.

If we are serious about naming ourselves "Israel" after his transformed self, we can, as the People Israel, take on the task of wrestling with the seemingly obdurate reality of our own day—the task of moving beyond this destructive dilemma. ■

Is "Land for Peace" Legitimate?

Reflections on the Six-Day War, 50 Years Later

BY SHAUL MAGID

A FEW YEARS AGO I was riding in a car with an Israeli friend on Highway Six in Israel, a fairly new road that runs north-south through the middle of the country. Somewhere along the way I saw a section of the Security Wall just off in the distance. I asked him why they built the wall there. He responded, "Simple. To prevent them from throwing stones at us—and to prevent us from seeing what we are doing to them." It was an honest response, perhaps too honest, of what it is like to live in today's divided Israel, in a situation that each side justifies in a manner that only increases its corrosive nature.

It is common to describe this situation as foisted on Israel through the events of the Six Day War in 1967, and in one sense this is correct. The war was not initiated by Israel. And the Occupation was a consequence of that war. Yet this common narrative is only one part of the story. In an arresting moment in the recent film *Censored Voices* (2015) directed by Mor Loushy, a solider interviewed a week after the war in 1967 stated that he went to war to defend his country and came back a week later to a different country. The current situation is a result of the unfolding story of that different country. Accordingly, what follows is an assessment of the claims that emerged—sometimes overt, sometimes covert—after 1967 and morphed into what is now known as the "peace process."

While the Occupation as we know it in 2017 may have been ultimately initiated by Israel's victory in the Six Day war, the Occupation was not *made* in 1967. Rather, it emerged through Israel's response to the new reality brought about by that war. As Gershon Goremberg shows in great detail in his *Accidental Empire: Israel and the Birth of the Settlements 1967-1977* (2006), the Six Day War created a practical and ideological vacuum in those early days that was accompanied by a combination of skepticism, unpreparedness, and disbelief on the part of Israel's leaders. Hidden away in the mix was an ideology that had its roots in the territorial maximalism of Ze'ev Jabotinsky's Revisionist Zionism (discredited by David Ben Gurion) that had remained largely dormant for years under the weight of consecutive Labor governments. In another corner was a group of young disaffected religious Jews, many from Kibbutz Ha-Dati (the religious Kibbutz Movement) yeshivot who had recently discovered the son of R. Abraham Kook, R. Zvi Yehuda, and founded a movement called Gahelet that began to develop a messianic religious ideology. In a now famous sermon delivered on Israel Independence Day, May 1967, Gahelet's ideological leader R. Zvi Yehuda Kook lamented that he could not in good conscience celebrate Israel's independence while Hebron, Shechem (Nablus), Rachel's Tomb, etc. were not under Jewish sovereignty. Less than two months later, in what was understandably understood by many as miraculous, all of the sites R. Zvi Yehuda mentioned in his Israel Independence Day sermon were in Israel's hands. The sermon was viewed as an instance of clear prophecy and the movement, later to be known as Gush Emunim, became the force driving the ideology of Greater Israel that has generated and perpetuated the legitimacy of the Occupation.

While this religious ideology helped generate post-67 Israel, the Occupation has morphed in recent decades into the language of security rather than messianism (the security argument did exist early on as a factor). The claim to legitimacy of the messianic ideology of Gush Emunim is purely theological. By contrast, a security approach requires a political end game. That end game became known as the "peace process." The "peace process" as we know it today was not a joint venture between the Israelis and Palestinians, rather it is a category created unilaterally by Israel and supported by the U.S. and then presented to the Palestinians. In Israel, the

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Placed in the center of Palestine's largest city, Hebron, the Israeli settlement displays its arrogance.

During a nonviolent protest in Al Ma'Sara in the West Bank, Palestinian activists wrap themselves in chains to show solidarity with prisoners in Israeli jails.

Top: Faryn Borella Bottom: Ryan Rodrick Beiler | Activestills

peace process is embraced by the left and used by the right; it serves to maintain hope and stall progress. But the problem with the "peace process" is that it is not based on equal claims and reciprocity with Palestinians. The very founding of the process is thus one-sided, emerging from a unilateral Israeli narrative. It has yielded little results and in its present instantiation, I do not think it can succeed.

Let me explain. The "peace process" is based on the principle of Land for Peace. Fair enough. But what is Land for Peace, exactly? Land for Peace is based on two premises—one empirical, one ideological. The empirical claim is that Jews have control over the land from the river to the sea; this claim describes reality and is not contestable. The second claim is that Jews have a *right* to that land. That claim is ideological and thus contestable. Once one accepts both premises, the term Land for Peace becomes operative. Without the second premise, the first premise functions simply as an exercise of military power that does not have a moral foundation sufficient to justify Land for Peace as part of a "peace process."

Let's briefly interrogate the second premise. The premise of "rights" here can be founded on numerous claims. One claim might be theological; that the Hebrew Bible promises the Land of Israel to the Jews. This is the premise upon which Gush Emunim is founded. It serves the theological narrative in a convincing way with ample scriptural proof and the weight of tradition. Many ultra-Orthodox anti-Zionists agree with this claim as well. For them, God indeed gave the land of Israel to the Jews but the fulfillment of that promise requires explicit messianic intervention that has thus far not emerged. For those who do not adhere to this ultra-Orthodox view, one question would be whether a theological claim alone can function toward the national ends of a modern nation-state. For the ultra-Orthodox anti-Zionists, the theological claim actually undermines the possibility of a modern nation-state.

Another claim might be historical; that Jews have consistently lived in Erez Israel from antiquity and thus maintain the historic rights to the land. This claim is problematic for multiple reasons, not least because it is contestable empirically. Even if there may have been some Jews who lived in Palestine throughout history, what number of Jews would constitute continuous settlement? For example, when Nahmanides immigrated to Jerusalem toward the end of the thirteenth century he wrote back to his son that there was not even a quorum (i.e., ten men) in Jerusalem sufficient for public prayer. Furthermore, the Palestinians can, and do, make a counter claim that they too have been inhabiting the land consistently for centuries, thus introducing a competing historical claim. In this case, without theology, one historical claim is not any more legitimate than another.

The theological claim and the historical claim have often been adopted to make the more amorphous, and secular, claim of "homeland"—that is, that the land from the river to the sea constitutes the Jewish "homeland." This is the "rights" claim made by the Israeli Prime Minister and has been consistently deployed from the early phases of Zionism until the present. While theological and historical in its origins, the "homeland" claim is language that eschews the pitfalls of the purely theological (which may be true from a religious perspective but irrelevant for modern statecraft) and the historical (which is empirically contestable).

> **But the problem with the "peace process" is that it is not based on equal claims and reciprocity with Palestinians.**

Following Hannah Arendt in her essay "To Save the Jewish Homeland," I am in favor of the claim of Erez Israel as the "homeland" of the Jewish people that has economy in the modern discussion. What I find problematic is the use of homeland to justify the actions of the Israeli nation-state and in particular as its justification or rationale for occupation. The homeland claim does not deny the same land as the homeland for another people and, as such, undermines the use of the claim to argue for exclusive "rights" to the land. One finds this claim manifest in settlers who argue that Jews should have a "right" to live anywhere in the land of Israel yet do not extend that right to non-Jews (i.e. Palestinians). While some use the purely theological argument, many prefer the more palatable homeland argument claiming that as the Jewish homeland the entire land of Israel should be accessible to Jews. Even if we give credence to this claim, this "right" does not necessarily, or logically, translate to political sovereignty. Some, like the settler Rabbi Menachem Froman, are sensitive to that point. Froman claimed he would prefer to remain in his settlement Tekoa (in Erez Israel) and become a citizen of Palestine. Most settlers, however, would not agree to this separation of homeland and state.

In addition, homeland does not come with any entitlement to a political structure. And by extension, homeland is not dependent on a nation-state as its articulation (e.g., Israel was certainly the homeland of the Jews before Zionism). In practice, the secular homeland claim is often founded on the Holocaust, as Netanyahu made quite clear in the 2013 U.N. speech, even though the Holocaust plays a very small role in the religious messianic narrative of Gush Emunim that filled the ideological vacuum in the wake of 1967.

My point here is to argue that the peace process, built on Land for Peace, is founded on two claims to the entirety of

Palestinian youth in Kafr Qaddum in the West Bank throw stones during a weekly demonstration in 2015 that started in 2011 to protest the closing of a main road that connected the village to Nablus.

Yotam Ronen | Activestills

the land (one empirical and thus incontestable, one ideological and thus contestable). The process is founded on the assumption that Israel is not *obligated* to relinquish land but would be willing to do so under a series of conditions that will result in Palestinian promises of peace, under conditions largely dictated by Israel and the U.S. (see Rashid Khalidi's *Brokers of Deceit*). The very formulation of Land for Peace defines every acre of land Israel cedes as a compromise. Rejecting Land for Peace excises Palestinians as partners in the peace process. Yet agreeing to Land for Peace is predicated on acquiescence to Israel's claim of exclusive *rights* over the land. The "peace process" largely assumes the narrative of one side and demands the other side to accede to that narrative as a prerequisite for participation in the process.

As we approach the fifty-year mark of the Occupation, it might be worthwhile to rethink the very foundations of the "peace process" and to revise them to create a model more conducive to success. This is not an "anti-Israel" or "anti-Zionist" position nor a denial of Erez Israel as the homeland of the Jews. It is also not to deny in principle the Realpolitik of power and conquest as an element in this situation. But Realpolitik should not, in my view, erase the underlying problems in the formation of a process toward resolution. Rather, I suggest that a just solution to this conflict might have a better chance of success if the process was not founded on the "rights" claim of one side (i.e., as distinct from the empirical reality of control), but rather a more equal template whereby the perspectives and claims of both sides are acknowledged at the outset. This is precisely what President Obama tried to do in his 2009 Cairo speech and one reason, in my view, why the pro-Israel camp was so opposed to that speech.

The ideology of rights that rose from the shock of sudden control of territory and a stateless population may have served Israel's interests until now (it has certainly enabled the success of the Settler Movement), but it has not created a realistic possibility for a resolution of the conflict. This is, in part, because for "peace process," as it has thus far been conceived by Israel and the U.S. as Land for Peace, requires the Palestinians to accept the Jewish right to the land (defined by theology, history, or "homeland") as the very beginning-point of negotiations. Land for Peace assumes that the Jews have a "right" to the land and are entitled to choose (or not choose) voluntarily to relinquish some of that right for peace. The Palestinians also make a case for their "right" to the land, but their claims are not built into "Land for Peace" equation because they were never a party to the formation of the "peace process." The alternative is a new conversation whereby both sides begin either with no rights or with equal rights to the land. This would be a major shift in terms of resolving the conflict. But after fifty years of failed attempts, it might be worth a try. ■

It's Time to Put Our Privileged Jewish Bodies on the Line

BY ILANA SUMKA

If we want to see an end to the Occupation, it's time to put our privileged Jewish bodies on the line. That's why hundreds of Jews from around the world will join with the Center for Jewish Nonviolence in the summer of 2017 to engage in civil disobedience and noncooperation with the unjust laws of 50 years of Occupation.

After living in Jerusalem for seven years and seeing the daily discrimination against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank while Jewish Israeli life went on largely unperturbed, I knew something more than another educational forum or another policy paper was called for.

The majority of the global Jewish world does not see the discrimination, segregation, and humiliation facing Palestinians living under the Occupation. But when Jews from America, Jews from Europe, Jews from Australia, and Jews from Israel stand together in solidarity with Palestinians, we will make the realities of the Occupation visible.

When Israeli soldiers and settlers treat Jews from around the globe the same way they treat Palestinians—with arrest and suppression of nonviolent activism—the realities of the Occupation will be impossible to ignore. Why? Because while the global Jewish community is unable or unwilling to identify with Palestinians, they identify with us—because we are Jews.

As we mark the shameful anniversary of 50 years of occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza, the Center for Jewish Nonviolence has been invited by our Palestinian partners to join them on Freedom Summer-esque projects. Building a community cinema in the segregated city of Hebron—not because a bunch of Jews from L.A. are expert builders but because our presence deters Israeli security forces from coming down overly harshly on the Palestinians who are otherwise prevented from building. We're invited to till the soil in the South Hebron Hills—not because a bunch of Jews from New York City are expert farmers, but because our presence deters the neighboring Israeli settlers from harassing the Palestinians and intimidating them from planting their fields. Just as it took the presence of white civil rights activists to step into the segregated South in the 1960s to shake the rest of America out of its complacency around segregation, so too will it take the presence of Jewish civil rights activists in the Palestinian Occupied Territories to open the eyes of the international Jewish community.

As a practitioner of nonviolent direct action, I agree with Rabbi Lerner that diaspora Jews must free ourselves from our deference to a moribund diplomatic process. However, there is a second, equally important habit of thinking that we must confront and reconsider: our preoccupation with Jewish views to the exclusion of Palestinians who are actually living under Occupation. Any theory of change that centers only Jewish concerns and leadership is doomed to fail. Fifty years on, we must learn this lesson.

Of course Palestinians are entitled to the right to vote for the government that controls their lives. The Israeli government must immediately recognize this right. At the same time, Jewish activists who hope to end the Occupation must stop trying to call the shots, and begin listening and deferring to the vibrant, nonviolent, grassroots movement for equality that already exists among Palestinians.

If and when this movement calls for a one person, one vote campaign, the Center for Jewish Nonviolence will be there to provide every resource at our disposal. If the Palestinian nonviolent movement instead decides now is not the time for such a campaign, we will defer to their strategic choices. All Jewish activists hoping to participate meaningfully in ending the occupation should do the same. ■

ILANA SUMKA is the founder and director of the Center for Jewish Nonviolence. She has twenty years of activism and organizing experience in the U.S., Israel, and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. She was the first Jewish person to receive an honorary Bethlehem "passport" in recognition of her commitment to ending the Israeli Occupation.

A Palestinian farmer, along with an international volunteer, plant an olive tree in the Ein El Qassis area of Al Khader village in the West Bank. The land there is threatened by Israeli settlers who have planted their own trees as a tactic to assert control over the territory.

Ryan Rodrick Beiler | Activestills

The Occupation At 50

A Palestinian Perspective

BY NIZAR FARSAKH

It would take seven years after the 1967 war for me to show up in this world, but its legacy continues to play a significant role in my life. If we are to engage this 50-year anniversary in a way that propels us towards a sustainable resolution, we will have to take stock of how it fundamentally shaped and shapes each of us. I argue that requires painful introspection to figure out what we individually are willing to give up in order to break that legacy's shackles.

I was born and raised in Dubai, not Palestine. Yet my father's stories of olive groves, simple lives, and rich, colorful histories permeated my life in Dubai. I would lay next to him in bed after he came back from work and he would tell me about my grandfather taking him to Jaffa when he was ten. "We would sell our grapes to the orange merchants of our splendid port city," he would say. He told me how in awe he was in the presence of larger-than-life merchants who'd drown him with their generosity and enchant him with their intellect. The place shined of stature and pride. But, in the winter of 1948, he saw those same proud men broken and defeated. Their backs bent from the weight of the belongings they were carrying, pleading with people from our village to "rent" them space under a tree. My father was 14 at the time. He told me, "At that moment, I promised myself that my generation will not make the mistakes of my father's." That day he joined the Palestine chapter of the Baath party, ushering in a life of political activism. He would later join Fateh and fight alongside Arafat, intent on transforming his people from refugees to freedom fighters.

Nizar Farsakh was a member of the Palestinian negotiating team from 2003-2008. He is currently a leadership and negotiations trainer based in Washington D.C. and is involved in nonviolence initiatives in the U.S. and Palestine.

Alas, on the 5th of June 1967, he found himself in his father's 1948 shoes. He had been working in Jordan at the time and was conflicted over whether to go fight, even die, for what remained of Palestine or take my mother's suggestion: "What if you stayed to bring up smart educated Palestinian children with even more zeal and passion for Palestine? Wouldn't you be doing more for Palestine that way?" He opted for that route and from that point on our family thought, talked, breathed, and dreamt Palestine all the time. While I was only half Palestinian (my mother was Italian), my sister and I became deeply involved in the cause in ways our purebred cousins were not. I studied politics, was active in campus, worked in civil society, and then in negotiations—always looking for new ways, more impactful ways to achieve Palestinian liberation. The five years I spent with the negotiating team jaded me as I quickly got disillusioned with the process and, more importantly, shell-shocked by internecine Palestinian fighting. I felt we had totally lost our way and had a bigger problem on our hands than the Occupation. At my friend's counsel, I went to Harvard to join a mid-career program focusing on leadership. Two of my professors, both Jewish, got me reflecting on the water I was carrying and my purpose. I found myself asking fundamental questions about my identity and what Palestine means to me; a diaspora who chose to go back and then left again. It was then that I made object that to which I was subject. I finally could see the Occupation and not be subsumed by it. I started seeing new routes for my destination.

Everyone who is earnestly seeking a resolution to this conflict understands it is about two peoples fighting for their right to self-determination on the same piece of land. Yet, do we know what losses are entailed? Not territory, not resources, not even power, but identities and loyalties. Do we know how to help author a new "us" that honors our history and ancestors just enough, but not too much that we continue to be shackled by it? Average Israelis understand Palestinian suffering, they just don't see how they can safeguard Jewish national aspirations without infringing on Palestinians. Likewise, Palestinians don't see how they can take the reins of their destiny while keeping the Zionist project intact. These are not policy questions, they are fundamental questions about who we think we are, what role our history plays in our lives, and our willingness to take responsibility for reauthoring that identity. To do that, without feeling disloyal to all one's upbringing, family's sacrifices, and people's narrative, is far more difficult than negotiating a political settlement.

As Palestinians, our main issue is in fact being the authors of our own destiny. We are tired of being collateral damage to colonialism, Europe's nation-state experiment, anti-Semitism, global politics, and an afterthought of the U.S. relationship with Israel. For us, the Occupation and its continued persistence for 50 years and the Balfour Declaration 50 years before that are the recurring manifestations of the predominance of other powers over us; the Ottomans, the British, the Zionists, the Europeans, the Americans, and the Arab regimes. The PLO was created by the Arab League in 1965 to contain the Palestinians (seen as a liability to Arab regimes) but we've fought hard, and sacrificed dearly, to make it truly the sole representative of our people. So when Israelis decry the absence of a Palestinian Ghandi, Palestinians hear the oppressor intruding even in our choice of resistance modes. To us it betrays that Israelis still don't get it. While I believe nonviolence is indeed the optimal way for us to gain our freedoms, it needs to be our form of nonviolence that emanates from our pain and speaks to our aspirations. It should not be a track laid down by our oppressors for us to ride on. This was the fundamental flaw in Oslo's architecture and Arafat simply did not understand that. Ayman Odeh today articulates the Palestinian form of nonviolence well but I would caution against resting our hopes on one man. The savior mentality—Nasser, Arafat, Saddam, and Erdogan are all shiny objects that distract us from doing the real work. They are maladaptive responses where we abdicate our responsibility in authoring our fate rather than all of us plunging our hands in that collective dough.

At 50, the Occupation feels like the weight of my father's failure and my grandfather's before that as well as the lessons they've taught me and the values; dignity, pride, fairness, righteousness, integrity, perseverance, hard work, generosity, and respect. They're all on my shoulders and I'm wondering what do I honor in that legacy and what do I let go of, and how? How do I spare my 11-year-old from standing in my shoes of failure? My grandfather took pride in the fact that his sons disagreed with his political views, and my father entertained the Jewish friends I brought home and now I find myself teaching my 11-year-old how to make Palestinian food and work hard to make her summers in Bir Zeit as memorable and special as my father's bedtime stories were to me.

At 50, the Occupation is witnessing a Palestinian population questioning the wisdom of toothless negotiations as well as the utility of non-strategic use of force. I hear of campaigns that transformed the traditional Palestinian mantra "we die so that Palestine lives" to "we live so that Palestine lives." I see diaspora youth actively crafting career paths that bind them to Palestine while being true to their non-Palestinian dimensions of their identities. I listen to young Palestinian women refusing to rein in their rights till after the liberation of Palestine.

I am now 43 and for me the Occupation is an event that contributes to who I am and what I seek in life. But it is also a vessel through which I'm authoring my fate. I have chosen what to do with the Occupation, I am not letting it do onto me. ■

IfNotNow, a movement to end American Jewish support for the Occupation of Palestine and to advocate for freedom and dignity for all, marches through the streets of San Francisco as part of their High Holidays festivities, calling on the San Francisco Jewish Federation and the larger Jewish community to end their support of the Occupation

Which Side Are You On, My People?

Ending American Jewish Support for the Occupation

BY SIMONE ZIMMERMAN AND YONAH LIEBERMAN

In July 2014, the American Jewish establishment mobilized tens of thousands of American Jews in support of an unnecessary and devastating war on Gaza, while those of us who openly questioned and decried the senseless loss of life were shouted down and labeled traitors.

It was that summer, while saying kaddish for the Israelis and Palestinians who had been killed, that IfNotNow was born to challenge the establishment's clear moral failure.

Two years later, while thousands of AIPAC conference attendees welcomed Donald Trump with standing ovations, hundreds of IfNotNow activists converged on Washington D.C. to lay the groundwork for the bold, soulful organizing that is now known as the #JewishResistance.

As Trump went on to win the election riding a wave of xenophobia and racism, and white supremacists celebrated in public, the necessity of resisting arm in arm with others under attack was no longer an abstract concept. So we showed up to protest his inauguration with Black, Muslim, and immigrant communities.

It is just as clear to us now, as it was in 2014, which side we must be on.

We are writing this piece just a month into the Trump Administration as some of our worst nightmares have already begun to materialize. With "father of the alt-right" Steve Bannon at his side, Trump quickly signed the Muslim ban and prepared plans for a larger wall on the Mexican border. Meanwhile, his administration ignored white supremacist attacks on Muslims at prayer and bomb threats to dozens of Jewish Community Centers across the nation.

While many progressive Jewish organizations recognize the moral crisis of the moment, most of the traditional establishment has continued with business as usual.

For IfNotNow, watching the Jewish establishment normalize white supremacy and anti-Semitism is heartbreaking, but not shocking—for years they have destroyed their moral credibility in the name of preserving support for Israel at all costs, and against the will of the majority of our community.

We should not be surprised that after decades of equating loyalty to Judaism with loyalty to Israel, the American Jewish establishment is failing to act on the crisis of a Trump presidency. But we should be alarmed. The Jewish world is at a critical juncture.

SIMONE ZIMMERMAN is an organizer and activist from Los Angeles. Zimmerman graduated from UC Berkeley and served as the National President of J Street U. She is a founding leader of IfNotNow and is currently living in Tel Aviv as a Dorot Fellow. YONAH LIEBERMAN is a founding member of IfNotNow based in Brooklyn. He is originally from Washington, D.C. and has also organized around issues of immigration, housing, and racial justice.

Faryn Borella

Palestinians use a ladder to climb over the wall in A-Ram in July 2013.

Oren Ziv | Activestills

While Prime Minister Netanyahu took the time to tweet support for Trump's anti-Muslim policies, he could not be bothered to comment on the administration's erasure of Jews from their Holocaust Remembrance Day statement or on the bomb threats at JCCs. It is clear which side he has chosen.

The question today is: which side will American Jews choose? If we oppose Trump's racist policies towards Arabs and Muslims at home, will we also oppose Netanyahu's in Israel? When Netanyahu evokes the lessons of "never again" to justify incitement against Palestinians, but stays silent when literal Nazi supporters are welcomed in the White House, will we finally stand against his lies?

We know our history well enough to recognize what we see today. It is time to act.

We are in awe of Jewish resilience. Our people learned the hard way of the need to look out for ourselves when no one else did. But if we are only for ourselves, what are we? If we carry the memories of our ancestral trauma, but disregard the impact our fear has on the lives of Palestinians living under occupation, and on other minority communities erased and ignored here at home, what have we become?

That's why IfNotNow is building a mass movement, led by young people, to get our community to speak out—publicly and often—against the white supremacy that has infected the Oval office, against the Occupation, and to reject the false choice between defending Jewish safety and valuing Palestinian lives.

We are showing our community how to move beyond superficial discourse, intellectual red lines, and hollow statements toward concrete action for a better world. In this moment of great uncertainty, we reject politics based on fear, hate, and division. We have already seen how normalizing violent threats and ideas can allow material violence to become status quo.

Any American effort to try and end the Occupation without support of the American Jewish community is likely to fail. American Jews are not the sole or primary supporter of the Occupation—and we are not naïve, we know that even without American Jewish support, the Occupation would not end tomorrow—but we are uniquely positioned to affect change. The movement to end the Occupation needs a focused strategy to dramatically shift the center of power in our community.

Our job is to remind our community every day of the crisis at hand, to be the leaders our institutions refuse to be. In this moment of fear and uncertainty, we are inviting our community to believe that a different world is possible. From our homes to our synagogues and day schools and into the streets, singing and marching, we are inviting our community to join our movement to fight for freedom and dignity for all. ■

Palestinians Perpetually Participating

BY HAGAI EL-AD

When Israelis vote, Palestinians do not. But they do get to participate: they can watch. Like the residents of the Palestinian village of Beit Ur al-Fauqa in the occupied West Bank who get to watch as the ballots cast by their Israeli settler neighbors from Beit Horon are shipped to election headquarters—to the Knesset that Palestinians do not get to vote for (but whose decisions control their lives) on a highway they cannot use (but built on land confiscated from them).

Palestinians also get to participate in the legal proceedings of Israeli courts: they get to be convicted. Not much of a surprise, given the clear division of roles in the theater of injustice of military courts. Israelis are always cast as judges, prosecutors and issuers of the military orders under which Palestinians get to play their humble roles as objects for detention, interrogation, prosecution, and conviction.

Even when Israelis regulate relative minutiae such as fishing, Palestinians get to participate. Israel recently revised fishing regulations in the Mediterranean, prohibiting fishing near the coastline in order to prevent harm to vulnerable marine habitats. However, along the Gaza coast, Israel imposes restrictions that are the very reverse: Gaza's fishermen are not allowed to go more than a few miles from the coastline. We regulate, they participate.

The population registry also has Palestinians participating. While the population registries for Israelis and Palestinians are separate, they are both administered by Israel, which registers not only its own citizens, but also Palestinians (be it in Gaza, the West Bank or East Jerusalem). For some politicians the statistics derived from these registries may make for dreadful demographic scenarios, but nevertheless Palestinians do participate: being born, getting married, from one generation to the next.

Israel's planning and building bureaucracy also has Palestinian participation. As far back as 1971—very near the beginning of those infamous fifty years of occupation—Israel cancelled the local planning committees in the West Bank, transferring all such powers to its own hands. Consequently, while Palestinians are not represented in the planning process of their lands, they do get to participate in the outcomes. Their villages are like black holes, places where virtually no new planning can reach, thus rendering their homes and construction illegal. A legally-approved master plan is needed for a hookup to running water. But the masters have other plans. So Palestinians get to participate in the planning process not by getting running water, but rather by getting bulldozed.

> **Palestinian participation in the planning process? By getting their homes bulldozed.**

Indeed, representative democracy has been recently declining globally. But lack of representation does not preclude participation. For fifty years, we have lived separately-together under one rule: our rule. And yet, Palestinians do participate. They have never ceased—and they never will. One day, participation as unwilling subjects will morph into a different form of existence in Palestine. Under a small patch of sky, separately-together or otherwise, we are all here—and we all remain here—on this small patch of land, at the Mediterranean's edge. ■

HAGAI EL-AD, an Israeli human rights activist, is the executive director of B'Tselem. Prior to joining B'Tselem, El-Ad was the director (2008–2014) of the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) and the first executive director (2000–2006) of the Jerusalem Open House for Pride and Tolerance. Born in Haifa, El-Ad completed his B.Sc. and M.Sc. (Astrophysics) at the Hebrew University; he was a pre-doctoral fellow at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics in Cambridge (1997–2000). In 2014, El-Ad was named among Foreign Policy magazine's "100 Leading Global Thinkers." In 2016, El-Ad spoke before the United Nations Security Council and called for international action to bring an end to the Occupation. He lives in Jerusalem.

A Blessing in the Midst of the Earth

BY DAVID ZASLOW

Imagine a superhighway starting in Aswan in southern Egypt and following the Nile, running across the Sinai, up past southern Jordan, crossing the river and then up through Israel, the West Bank, into Lebanon, crossing northern Iraq, past Aleppo in Syria, into Iran, and ending in Turkey. That's what the prophet Isaiah envisioned for the future when he wrote:

> On that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian will come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians. On that day Israel will be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, whom the Lord of hosts has blessed, saying, "Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my heritage." (Isaiah 19:23-25)

This vision in which God declares "Blessed be Egypt my people" and "Assyria the work of my hands" is so unrealistic from a political perspective that it seems more like wishful thinking than prophecy. It's hard to reconcile this vision with the current situation where Egypt and Jordan are the only Muslim nations that recognize Israel's legal right to exist.

In 1998, while on a Compassionate Listening tour of Israel, West Bank, and Gaza, I was fortunate to meet the late Rabbi Menachem Froman, chief rabbi of the settlement of Tekoa, who taught that we should live as if our dreams of peace really can come true. He affirmed Isaiah's vision that someday "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more (Isaiah 2:4), and "the wolf shall live with the lamb." (Isaiah 11:6). Froman was a modern prophet living in a settlement in what some call occupied territory, some call disputed territory, some call the West Bank, and others call the heart of the ancient Jewish homeland.

We visited Froman in Tekoa, the ancient city of the prophet Amos, located between Hebron and Jerusalem in the West Bank. He was one of the founders of *Gush Emunim*, the right-wing settler movement formed after the Six-Day War. If you read about him, or check out his internet interviews, you'll see his politics defy simple categorization. After our meeting I said, "He's so far right wing that he comes out on the left, but never gives up the right."

At interfaith gatherings Froman loved to ask people to raise their left hands, then their right hands, and at his command bring both hands together and start clapping. This was based on a teaching about unity from the nineteenth century mystic Rebbe Nachman. Froman's followers were religious Palestinian and Israeli Muslims, Christians, Druze, Jews, and a ragtag assortment of Israeli peaceniks, all of whom smiled when he had everybody clapping. Sadly, there are not enough religious leaders today who dare to get people clapping or smiling together.

How was Froman a right-winger? He maintained the settlers should never leave the ancient land of Judea and Samaria even if it would eventually be governed by Palestinians. When the settlements in Gaza were being evacuated under the orders of Ariel Sharon in 2005, Froman was there hugging a Torah, announcing that the settlers should never leave as they were being evicted by the IDF.

How is it that Froman actually "comes out on the left?" He taught that in the Torah people don't own land. God says "all land is mine" (Lev. 25.23; Ex. 19:5)—and the Koran mirrors this teaching. Froman believed that not only should Jewish settlers remain in their homes, but so should all the inhabitants—Muslims, Christians, Druze, and Bedouin. He espoused a kind of utopian post-nationalism.

When one of the founders of Hamas, Ahmed Yassin, was imprisoned in Israel for terrorism in the 1990s, it was Froman who visited, debated theology, and negotiated his release after Yassin had a stroke. Froman, foolishly or wisely, believed he had a potential partner for peace with Hamas. He reasoned the failure of previous peace deals was due to leaving out religious leaders. Since Muslim extremists would undermine peace deals through terrorism, he thought they should be brought into negotiations from the start. I'm not sure I can agree with Rabbi Froman's assessment of Hamas being a potential partner. When our group visited Sheikh Yassin in 1998, he made it clear to us that based on the Koran, Jews could live in Palestine (from the river to the sea) but that Palestinians would never accept the existence of Israel. I was surprised by his lack of duplicity. Yassin always believed the conflict was religious in nature. Froman agreed but maintained that since the Torah and Koran shared the same concept of land ownership, this was a serious basis for peace (never mind that this idea was treated as naive by many politicians).

RABBI DAVID ZASLOW is the spiritual leader of the Havurah Synagogue in Ashland, Oregon, a Jewish Renewal community. He is the author of *Reimagining Exodus: A Freedom Story* and *Jesus: First-Century Rabbi*.

There are many cultures indigenous to the Holy Land. Christian Palestinians, for example, have been there since the first century. Other Christians came with the Crusades. Since they've been there almost 1,000 years, they are considered indigenous, even though they originally came as conquerors. Many Jews, as we know, never left the land after the pogroms of the Roman, Byzantine, Arab, and Ottoman occupation of Judea (renamed Palestine by the Romans to sever its connection to the Jewish people). Others who were forced to flee the land settled in Arab countries and Europe.

When Israel was reborn in 1948, Jews from Europe, and those expelled from Arab countries, saw themselves as returnees, not conquerors or colonialists. Yet when they returned they found other inhabitants who were also indigenous to the land. We are still faced with the same question, especially now at the fiftieth anniversary of the Six-Day War, of whether there is room for many religions and indigenous cultures to live peacefully on the same land. However imperfectly, this is already happening within the Green Line of Israel where freedom of religion, assembly, and redress through the courts is available to all its citizens.

For us to uphold Rav Froman's vision of the right hand and the left hand clapping together, both sides must face the truths and concerns that the other side holds. Many of my friends on the political right have justifiable security concerns for Israel. They wonder why the Palestinian Authority since 1967 has squandered opportunities to build a strong, democratic infrastructure, and why they repeatedly refuse to agree to a compromise on the division of land. Bill Clinton's chief negotiator in 2000, Dennis Ross, wrote in his book *The Missing Peace,* that even though Arafat was offered 97 percent of the pre-1967 land in the West Bank, he walked away from the negotiations and never made a counter offer. Ross and President Clinton place the responsibility for the lack of a Palestinian state on the heads of a visionless Palestinian leadership, not on the building of homes in the West Bank.

Although these friends on the right are justified in their concerns, their focus on security often overrides the vision of cultural harmony that the prophets espoused. According to Froman, Israelis don't always understand the necessity to respect Arab culture and Islam, and can be passive about cultural prejudices against Arabs. When Rabbi Froman talked about the necessity for "respect for Islam" he meant it. If extremist settlers defaced or destroyed Palestinian property, Froman often lead other settlers to express regret or make reparations for destroyed property. He had no problem being an Orthodox rabbi and proclaiming "Allah hu akbar" in public.

On the other hand, many of my friends on the left get the prophetic vision of unity, but are somewhat naïve about the security demands that Israel makes in negotiations. Some maintain that if only Israel would unilaterally acknowledge a Palestinian state without the security demands being met first, this would somehow transform Palestinian attitudes toward Israel. They believe that the settlements, checkpoints, security wall, and Israel's disproportionate power are the primary factors in the lack of a Palestinian state today. Some on the far left consider the terrorist acts of extremists in Hamas and Hezbollah as understandable responses to the Israeli settlement policies.

Although many Palestinians support a two-state solution today, their leaders are not willing to meet Israel's security demands. Israel is rightfully concerned that a Palestinian state without a democratic infrastructure in place would make them vulnerable to a Hamas takeover. Imagine, for instance, if the Golan Heights had been given back to Syria years ago as Assad demanded, Israel today would be susceptible to invasion by either Syria or ISIS. The vast majority of Israelis don't fear a two-state solution. They fear a Palestinian state without a strong democratic infrastructure that would be vulnerable to takeover by an extremist entity like Hamas.

"Israel is rightfully concerned that a Palestinian state without a democratic infrastructure in place would make them vulnerable to a Hamas takeover."

Although the "left hand" needs to face Israel's security concerns realistically, it is incumbent upon the "right hand" to deal with its own prejudices and fears. For both hands to clap, both have to focus on equal justice, and the messianic vision of unity between Ishmael, Isaac, Sarah, and Hagar. It's not just an olive branch that's needed, but on this fiftieth anniversary, I pray that in the memory of Rabbi Froman, Jews will hold onto the prophecy of Isaiah. I pray that religious Palestinians will unconditionally dissociate their beliefs from all forms of terror, violence, and hatred against Jews and secular Muslims. I pray that we all begin to imagine the superhighway that will be built, and that will bring people of all faiths between Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Iran, and Turkey together, with Israel as a blessing in their midst. ■

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It's the Occupation, Stupid!

(If that is the answer, what is the question?)

Hint: what do the alarming rise in anti-Jewish sentiment, the growing isolation and de-legitimization of Israel, the deepening despair of the Palestinians, and the threatening perversion of the Jewish future all have in common?

BY TONY KLUG

THE CONTINUING RISE in anti-Jewish sentiment in countries around the world is of course shocking and disturbing. But is it altogether surprising? I first addressed this issue some forty years ago when undertaking my doctoral research on Israel's rule over the West Bank during the early years of the Occupation. Here is a compressed version of what I observed in a pamphlet that was published in January 1977:

> *While Israel continues to rule over the West Bank, there are bound to be ever more frequent and more intensive acts of resistance by a population that is feeling encroached upon by a spreading pattern of Jewish colonization and whose yearning for independence is no less than was that of the Palestinian Jews in the early months of 1948. As long as Israel continues to govern that territory, she will have little choice but to retaliate in an increasingly oppressive fashion just to keep order. The moral appeal of Israel's case will consequently suffer and this will further erode her level of international support, although probably not amongst organized opinion within the Jewish diaspora. This sharpening polarization is bound to contribute to an upsurge in overt antisemitism.*

In response to this passage, I was told by an assortment of outraged readers that I simply did not get it. First, Israel would soon be returning the territory, or the bulk of it, to Arab rule (meaning to Jordan). Second, it was not independence the Palestinians wanted, but good governance and that is what they were getting from Israeli rule.

Third, bar the initial period following the 1967 war, there was very little Palestinian resistance and there was no reason to believe this would change (the first intifada would not break out for another ten years). The population was enjoying a standard of living and a level of security well above its previous imaginings. They were better off in almost every way, it was claimed, than Arabs living in Arab countries.

Fourth, the Jewish settlements had very little impact on the local Arab population and, where they did, it was almost entirely beneficial, for example in providing jobs (a few thousand settlers inhabited the Occupied Territories then compared with hundreds of thousands today). Fifth, international support for Israel was rock-solid and growing. Finally, latent anti-Jewish feeling has always resided in some segments of civil society (lamentably true) and its manifestation has nothing to do with the way Israel behaves (demonstrably false).

Despite my apparently being wrong on every count, the future played out pretty much as mapped out in the pamphlet. This was seriously depressing, particularly because it wasn't meant as a prediction. I was sure at that time, as were the vast majority of Israelis too, that Israel, in its own best interest, would be certain to end its occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the near future.

I don't expect to be around to shamelessly quote myself again in another forty years but, as passions continue to rise, it is surely self-evident that if Israel does not end the Occupation swiftly and if organized Jewish opinion in other countries appears to back it, there will almost certainly be a further surge in anti-Jewish sentiment, potentially unleashing more sinister impulses. This is not to justify such gloomy future developments of course, but it is not rocket science to see what lies ahead under these circumstances.

If we fail to understand these connections, and continue to identify uncritically with policies almost universally regarded as unjust and oppressive—policies that would never be condoned by the custodians of Jewish values if enacted by any other country—we will continue to rely on spurious

TONY KLUG is a special advisor on the Middle East to the Oxford Research Group and has written extensively about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for over forty years. This article is adapted from a recent talk to a synagogue audience in London, UK.

explanations for the rise in anti-Jewish feeling, even if there is some truth in them. In our bafflement, we will also continue to unfairly charge authentic supporters of universal human rights with being covert anti-Semites because their commitment to human rights principles does not stop at the Palestinian doorstep. An acquaintance quizzically remarked to me recently "I thought an anti-Semite was someone who hated Jews, not someone who Jews hated."

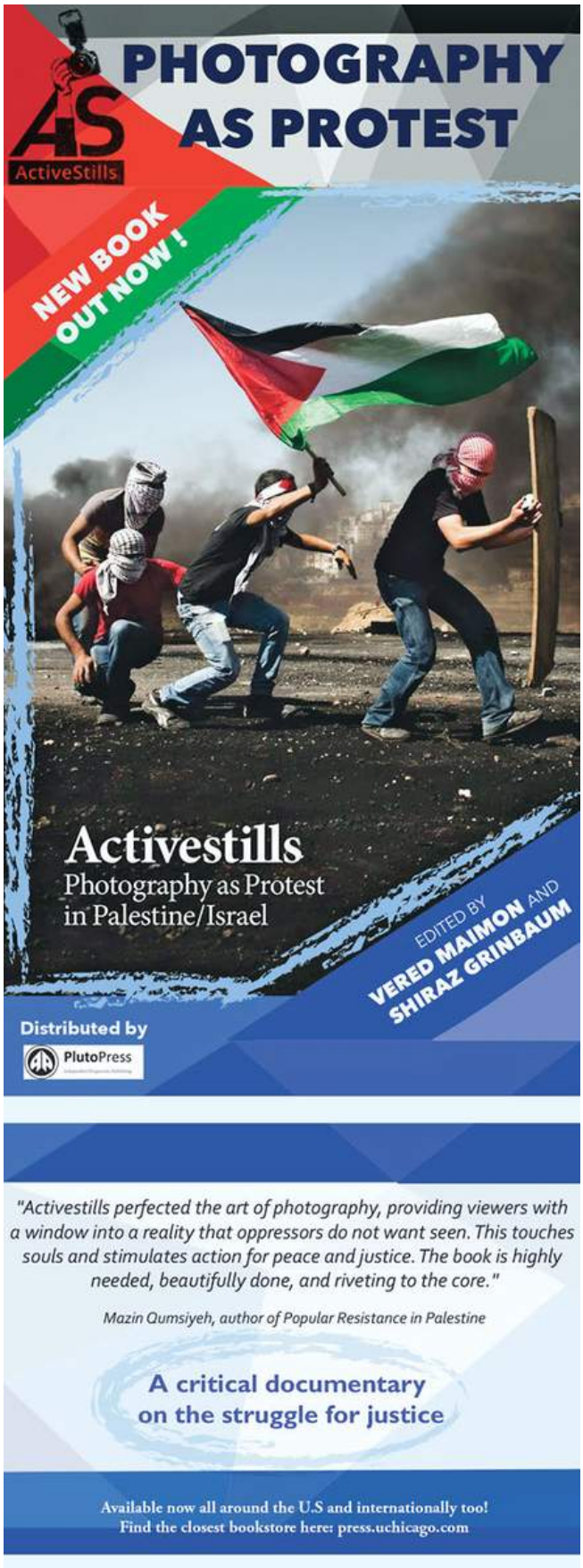
> **Ending the Occupation would puncture the rise in anti-Jewish feeling in countries around the world. For that reason, ending the Occupation is the personal business of Jews globally.**

Anti-Jewish sentiment, even when provoked by the ongoing Occupation, can be very distressing in and of itself for Jews on the receiving end, including Jews who oppose the Occupation. It may often be experienced as anti-Semitism, even if it is not that. But there is a larger danger, for the longer the negative feelings towards Jews persist, the greater the chance that they will, in some cases, tip into full-blooded anti-Semitism, a pernicious, closed dogma, seductive to some, that is forever lying in wait purportedly to "explain" all Jewish behaviour.

Thus, ending the Occupation—in addition to being the only way of reversing the largely self-inflicted wounds of growing de-legitimization and creeping isolation of Israel—is central to puncturing the rise in anti-Jewish feeling in other countries aroused by its continuation. This makes the question of Occupation very much the personal business of Jews around the world.

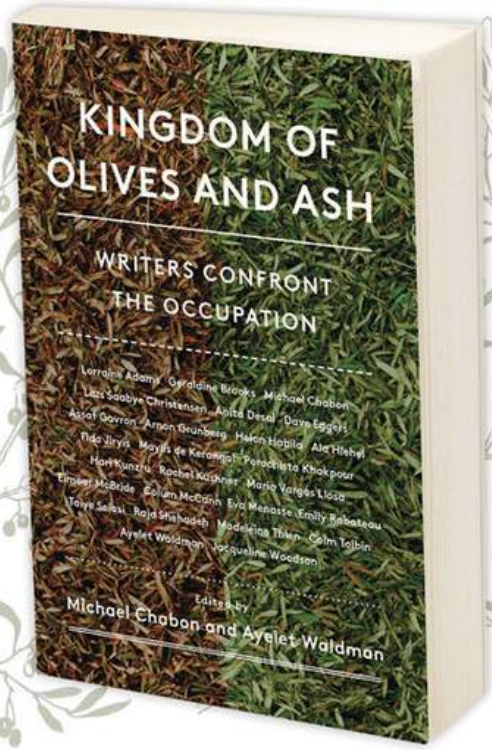
As precarious as it is, the present situation is on the brink of deteriorating markedly and projecting us into a new, very troubling, epoch. For years, many of us have sheltered behind the idea that one day soon there will be a Palestinian state in which Palestinians will be able to exercise their national, political, and civil rights. But the current Israeli government—far to the nationalist right of any of its predecessors—has recklessly blown the roof off of this sanctuary for the foreseeable future, so that we now face the naked reality of a state that, while it loudly trumpets its Jewishness to the world, looks set, in total contradiction, to withhold fundamental human rights indefinitely from millions of people. This stance, moreover, appears to have won the blessing of a gung-ho incoming Trump administration with little authentic understanding or genuine concern about the abiding issues.

But to what extent are we, as Jews, prepared to be complicit



KINGDOM OF OLIVES AND ASH

WRITERS CONFRONT THE OCCUPATION



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and be seen to be complicit in such blatant, open-ended discrimination? What would being implicated in such an unbridled, un-Jewish injustice do to such time-honoured Jewish themes as freedom, justice, and equality, principles that bind Jews of very different persuasions together, that lie at the core of Jewish identity, that have immensely contributed to human civilization, and that Jews have traditionally upheld for themselves and others facing persecution and other forms of adversity?

In the current circumstances, what impact do we imagine parading triumphantly in public squares in different countries draped in blue and white flags has on the minds of perplexed onlookers and on the perceptions of Palestinians themselves, whose lives are daily blighted by the nearly 50-year old military Occupation?

What may be done? Drawing on an original idea developed in conjunction with the Palestinian-American thinker Sam Bahour, my suggestion is that the Israeli government be vigorously pressed to make an imminent decision either to recognize an independent Palestinian state without further procrastination and assist constructively in its creation or, pending a future final settlement, grant full civil and political rights in the meantime to everyone living under Israeli jurisdiction. We have called for a popular campaign to this end. A suitable slogan might be: "We can accept either, but not neither."

This is an idea whose time, I believe, has come. It is no coincidence that other groups—including *Tikkun*, SISO (Save Israel, Stop the Occupation), and the Palestine Strategy Group—have been thinking along similar lines. To be clear: the proposal is not a call for a unitary state. As long as there is little authentic support on either side for a "one-state solution", it remains an implausible aim. Rather, it is more akin to the situation of the Scots in the United Kingdom, who enjoy equal rights with everyone else until a possible future "two-state solution" in the UK is enacted.

How can anyone justify it being different for the Palestinians? If we prick them, do they not bleed? By posing this stark choice, the aim is to provoke a vigorous debate and spark new political currents within Israel which may return the two-state idea to the top of the Israeli political agenda—before it really is too late. This would be good for all parties: good for Israel—enabling it to rediscover its soul; good for the Palestinians—according them a place in the sun at last; and good for the prospects of an eventual peaceful settlement (maybe under the rubric of a re-energized Arab Peace Initiative).

It would also be good for the Jews. The conflict with the Palestinians has dominated and distorted the Jewish world for too long. It is time to bring it to an end and stop the infamy of a half-century of military occupation of another people, and allow us all to get back to the business of being ourselves. ■

Numerology

BY AARON ISSAR BACK

Nearly three decades ago, a new Israeli protest group was launched, calling itself "The 21st Year" and declaring in its founding covenant that:

> *The 40th year of the independence of Israel is the 21st year of its occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. For more than half of its years of statehood, Israel has been an occupying power . . . The Occupation is not only a deplorable situation affecting the lives of the Palestinians it has an equally pernicious effect on the very political and spiritual substance of Israeli society.*

I joined the 21st Year while I lived in Israel and I remember the urgency we felt to act after two decades of occupation. When the first Intifada erupted in 1987, we committed ourselves to resistance that would make clear our refusal to collaborate with the Occupation. We refused to call the territories Judea and Samaria; did not enter the Occupied Territories without an invitation from Palestinian residents; boycotted goods produced by Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories; supported acts of protest and peaceful resistance by Palestinians; and refused to do army service in the Occupied Territories. Many of us were arrested for peaceful protest and spent time in Israeli jails.

In the waning days of the Intifada, I went to work for B'Tselem, joining my friends who believed that if Israelis only knew more about what was being done in their name they would oppose the Occupation. Since then, I have made my work in the world of progressive philanthropy, seeking to strengthen Israeli peace and human rights organizations. These organizations merit our moral and financial support. And yet, despite the many efforts of individuals and organizations alike, the Occupation of over three million Palestinians continues. As Israel celebrates its sixty-ninth birthday, it has been an occupying power for fifty of those years. And the count continues.

At least two generations of Palestinians have grown up in the reality of occupation. I think of my friend Mohammed who was twenty when he taught me Arabic in Jerusalem in the late 1980s. He now has children older than he was when we met, and they still live under the rule of a military occupation. Today, the majority of Israelis were born after the Occupation began and know little of the Green Line and the injustices across it.

As progressive American Jews, we often affirm Dr. King's adage that the moral arc of the universe bends towards justice. But it does not bend on its own. It must become our most urgent priority to speak and act against the Occupation. We can start by being more specific with our language. For many, the word "occupation" has become stripped of its lived meaning, of what it really means for people to live under military rule. Almost thirty years ago, Israeli civil rights attorney Avigdor Feldman wrote in *Tikkun* about the denial of the intimate rights of Palestinians to "plant a tree, get married, have a child, and build a house." Let's describe the Occupation for what it is: the subjugation and dehumanization of human beings, and the denial of their rights to dignity and freedom.

We must also become bolder in action. We must out our communal institutions for blurring the distinction between Israel proper and the Occupied Territories. We must challenge the Jewish Federations for their new policy of including trips over the Green Line on their study tours and the granting of their funds to projects over the Green Line. We must push back against a growing stance within our synagogues and Jewish centers that the Occupation is too sensitive and explosive an issue to be debated and discussed. We must not allow the voices of political orthodoxy to demonize Jewish supporters of Israel who believe that BDS is the best way to end the Occupation.

Proactively, we can support the efforts of a new generation of young American Jews. Organizing efforts by groups such as J Street U, Open Hillel, and IfNotNow, are newly challenging all of us to hold the American Jewish community and its institutions accountable to our deepest values of justice and compassion. Our support of them includes joining their actions, amplifying their work, defending them when they are attacked, and giving them our financial support.

I know how easy it is to feel dispirited. When I despair, I remind myself that we have no other choice, that our

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ideological adversaries continue to vigorously organize and mobilize their forces, and that our action is most critical when the political horizon looks bleak. We must take to heart the words of Hagai El-Ad, the Director of B'Tselem who is also featured in this issue and who, in explaining why he spoke about the Occupation to the UN Security Council last fall, said:

> *There is no chance Israeli society, of its own volition and without any help, will end the nightmare. Too many mechanisms insulate the violence we conduct in order to take control of them. Too many excuses have accumulated. There have been too many fears and too much anger—on both sides—over the past 50 years. In the end, I'm sure, Israelis and Palestinians will end the Occupation, but we won't do it without the world's help.*

On the fiftieth anniversary, here at home within our own Jewish communities, it is our challenge and our responsibility to answer that call. ■

Finding Nonviolence in Jerusalem

The Palestinian Boycott of Jerusalem Municipal Elections Since 1967

BY OREN KROLL-ZELDIN

Palestinians in Jerusalem, who have the legal status of permanent residents and are permitted to vote in municipal (but not national) elections, have largely chosen not to participate in the city's electoral process since the start of the occupation in 1967. Boycotting the municipal elections is the longest lasting—and arguably most important—method of nonviolent resistance to the policies of discrimination and exclusion that Palestinians contend with in this contested city. While Jewish Israelis portend to be searching for a nonviolent Palestinian leader as a partner for peace, they fail to recognize the strength of the election boycott as one of many legitimate tools seeking justice and peace.

Palestinians boycott municipal elections as an unequivocal refusal to legitimate the Occupation of East Jerusalem and Israel's claims that Jerusalem is the "complete and united" capital of Israel. It is a technique used to refute the oft-cited assertion made by Jews, in Israel and the United States, that Israel's democratic system allows Palestinians to participate equally in the political process. For Palestinians, simply going to the polls to vote would not change systematic inequalities they experience daily. To be clear, this is not a general statement on the future of "one person, one vote" in Palestine/Israel but is rather a commentary on a specific slice of Palestinian society in Jerusalem where the one-state issue is largely irrelevant.

While many Jewish Israelis argue that if Palestinians voted they would be able to elect their own leaders to improve conditions of everyday life in East Jerusalem, Palestinians see the situation quite differently. First, they see voting as futile, reflecting the widespread belief that the municipality is merely an instrument of oppression rather than an entity to provide much needed social services. Second, they see the boycott as an important historical aspect of their resistance. Many Palestinians believe that after refusing to participate in the elections for this long, it would be a mistake to abandon the strategy. Third, the boycott expresses a unified Palestinian voice against discrimination and inequality. This is one of the few areas in Palestinian society where there is almost unanimous consensus, which is represented by the consistently low turnout of Palestinian voters in Jerusalem.

In short, refusing to participate in municipal elections is a profound nonviolent expression of defiance, a rejection of acquiescence to the impacts of occupation, separation, and exclusion. While Israeli policies of occupation seek to weaken and delegitimize all forms of Palestinian resistance, even those that are nonviolent, it is essential to acknowledge the legitimacy of the Palestinian boycott of Jerusalem's municipal elections. By doing so, not only will those committed to justice and peace recognize the ubiquity of Palestinian nonviolent resistance, but they can also strengthen these voices that challenge Israel's policies of exclusion in the contested city. ■

OREN KROLL-ZELDIN teaches in the Jewish Studies and Social Justice program at the University of San Francisco.

50 Years of Israel Imposing a One-State "Solution"

BY SAM BAHOUR

Doesn't 50 years of Israeli military occupation call for abandoning the two-state solution and adopting the one-state solution in order to threaten Israeli society into facing the implications of maintaining the Occupation? Not only is this question being asked much more frequently by younger Palestinians, but versions of it have emerged from the editorial board of *The New York Times* and even the former Obama White House itself.

The one versus two states debate has recently received increasing media focus and academic input, particularly in light of the seemingly impossible-to-achieve two-state solution that has, rightly or wrongly, long been considered the internationally-approved mantra for the resolution of the historic conflict between Palestinian nationalism and Zionism.

I do not subscribe to the notion that Palestinians should be using "threats" to articulate a strategic goal. I believe that such an approach weakens our ability to mobilize political alliances, solidarity communities, and most importantly, to mobilize our own people around a clear political goal. We do not need to drop our demand for independent statehood to use the one-state argument to shock Israelis into acting differently. The Israeli side has given us ideal tools for evoking such leverage. For example, when Israel evokes an existential fear of demographics—non-Jews exceeding the number of Jews between the Mediterranean Sea and Jordan River—and their need—70 years after the establishment of Israel—for Palestinians to confirm Israel's "right to exist," in other words, issue them a birth certificate, what Israel is actually introducing into the political discourse are showstoppers, knowing very well that what they are demanding from Palestinians has not been requested from any other country and will not be forthcoming from the people whose ruins Israel was built upon. Israel defines all of this as the need for a "Jewish state" or "nation state of Jews" or the like. Palestinians can use these Israeli-invented political levers to reframe the argument to highlight where continued military occupation and expansion will lead Israel, without explicitly changing our strategic goal of statehood.

> **Wide-scale nonviolent resistance exists in every corner of Palestine.**

Must we threaten a shift in our strategic political goal to invoke securing our rights and ending the Israeli Occupation? Such threats could backfire by causing the loss of support around the world that has taken four decades to nurture, namely the 138 counties that voted "yes" to the November 29, 2012 United Nations General Assembly bid that afforded Palestine a non-member observer state status, and the over 130 countries that recognized Palestine directly, such as Sweden.

Israel's successful forced geographic fragmentation of Palestinians, as well as their disproportional response to any form of nonviolent resistance against the Occupation, including arbitrary imprisonment, has stifled any ability for a mass civil disobedience movement to emerge. However, wide-scale nonviolent resistance exists in every corner of Palestine, from the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) Movement to the forced reality that has been placed on movement of

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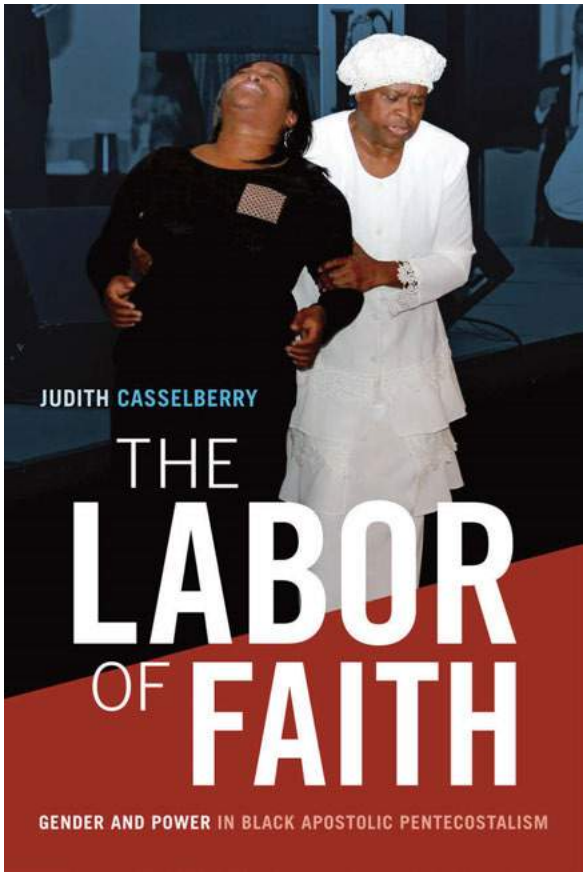
Palestinians inside the Occupied territory causing, for example, Palestinian students needing to cross Israeli military checkpoints and walls to get to school.

I argue that a rights-based approach is the most conducive one to the current Palestinian national agenda and that a political end game cannot be open-ended. Moreover, the struggle for national self-determination cannot come at the expense of the struggle for rights—and vice versa. I view these two processes as inseparable and asynchronous dynamics: one process focuses on the internationally enshrined *rights of the individual* (political, human, and civil rights), while the second focuses on the *rights of the nation* (national rights, specifically self-determination).

The current Palestinian policy of establishing a Palestinian state on 22 percent of British-mandated historic Palestine has international legitimacy and has witnessed the majority of the world's nations recognizing the State of Palestine based on that international legitimacy. It is therefore not an academic choice, but rather the result of already spent Palestinian political capital.

Simultaneously, the rights of the individual cannot remain at the mercy of the need to arrive at a political end game, as a type of prerequisite to the individual realizing his or her rights. This attempt to link the issues is grounded in a faulty political way of thinking that places the key issue of rights—political, economic, and social—at the end of a political spectrum that presumes the need to arrive at a macro-political framework *before* individual rights can be realized. This is fundamentally erroneous given that calling for, say, a one-state solution, does not advance the acquiring of rights, it merely blurs the difference between a political end game, which Palestinians have already defined with blood, sweat, and tears, and the hard work required to hold Israel accountable *today* for trampling on Palestinians' human rights.

The political end game is a single dimension to the conflict; however, immediate needs are rights, and these are just as important to individual Palestinians—those living under Occupation and elsewhere—as self-determination, if not more so. ■



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When Land is God

BY ARIK ASCHERMAN

Rabbi Arik Ascherman being assaulted by a masked West Bank Israeli settler with knife in his hand in response to Ascherman's attempts to prevent further uprooting of Palestinian olive trees by the settlers.

YouTube

My wife remembers huddling in a bomb shelter in 1967. Whatever revisionist historians may tell us today, many in the bomb shelter were asking whether Israel was about to be destroyed. When we not only survived, but ended up with most of the Biblical land of Israel under our control, this "miraculous" victory was incredibly intoxicating. Einat and her family were among the thousands who lined up to get to the *kotel* (Western Wall) when it was opened for visits for the first time on the Shavuot holiday. If we were already saying in our prayers that the creation of the State of Israel was *reshit tzmikhat guelateinu* (the beginning of the sprouting of our redemption), this was God's hand in history and one further step towards full redemption. Those warning that this could be a moral disaster for us were lone voices in the wilderness.

At the time, the main question was nevertheless security. Were we more secure returning the Occupied Territories for peace (as our first prime minister, Ben Gurion, originally advocated), or with territorial depth? The proclamation that there would be no recognition, no peace and no negotiations with Israel expressed by Arab leaders at the Khartoum Conference shortly after the war didn't help.

Today, many generals would say that even if there is a military justification for maintaining a military presence in the Occupied Territories, the need to defend settlements is a security liability. However, those powerful messianic forces filled the vacuum. They believed—and believe—that it is our God-given obligation to settle and "redeem" the Land by any means possible. Not to do so would be a sin.

There is no denying that, if one takes the Torah seriously, God promises the Land of Israel to the Jewish people in perpetuity, as a sign of the Covenant between us. However, that same Torah tells us time and again that we have not received a blank check. The amount of the Land we will live on at

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any time in history can expand or contract according to our moral behavior. While there is a huge debate within the Jewish world as to what moral behavior is, arguably the very acts required to rule over another people make us unworthy to hold onto the Land in God's eyes.

Most of my fellow Israelis do not see things this way. Either religious precepts are not a moral guide for them or their Judaism is a dangerous fusion of extreme nationalism and extreme particularism. For them, the Land has been elevated to the level of *avodah zarah* (idolatry). There are few Jews today who worship statues. The realization that money and power can also be idolatry has become almost cliché. What we don't realize is that those things we hold most dear because they truly and legitimately are special and holy are those things that pose the greatest danger of becoming idolatrous. Flags move me. Precisely because they so move me, I know that they can become *avodah zarah*. The same is true with Jewish peoplehood, the Land, and many other objects and concepts that are far from being inherently evil. That is why when I served as a congregational rabbi I always insisted that there be no flags in the sanctuary.

As Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel said when speaking out against racism:

"You shall not make yourself a graven image or any likeness of God. The making and worshiping of images is considered an abomination, vehemently condemned in the Bible. The world and God are not of the same essence. There can be no man made symbols of God.

And yet there is something in the world that the Bible does regard as a symbol of God. It is not a temple or a tree, it is not a statue or a star. *The symbol of God is man*, every man." (As Susannah Heschel has noted, if her father was writing today he would have no doubt used more gender-neutral language.)

I suppose that even human rights can become idolatry. However, as the late founder and spiritual leader of the Sephardic ultra-Orthodox party and movement "Shas" wrote in a ruling many of his supporters would rather forget, as holy as the Land of Israel is, human life is more holy. Therefore, as painful as it would be, territorial compromise would be permissible if it would prevent bloodshed. There are many religious Jews for whom disparaging the holiness of the Land is a conversation stopper. Admittedly, many of them only apply regarding their fellow Jews the obligations stemming from all human beings having been created in God's Image. But, when confronted, they cannot deny this core Jewish teaching. In the work of midrash (ancient rabbinic commentary on the Bible) *Mekhilta d'Rabbi Ishmael*, we are taught that the first commandment "I am Adonai your God" on the first of the two tablets received at Sinai is parallel to the sixth commandment "Do not murder" that is at the top of the second tablet because murdering a fellow human being diminishes God's Image in the world.

Is there any realistic hope of waking my fellow Israelis to the fact that we have been blinded by the holiness of the Land of Israel to the point of making it *avodah zarah*? Can we help them to see what we do to God's Image in Palestinians and in ourselves by maintaining an Occupation under which we have gone way beyond what is arguably about security to use overwhelming force to dispossess Palestinians and to exclude them from the institutions and decisions determining their fate? Could they realize that our obligation to respect the human rights of Palestinians is even greater if we take our prime minister at his word when he stated that there will be no end to Occupation on his watch? That we must honor the Image of God whether there will or will not eventually be a one, two, or ten state solution?

Everywhere I go I encounter despair. I often tweak the famous quote to say "The only thing we have to despair of is despair itself." People often laugh at me for remaining optimistic, and I admit that it is hard at the moment. However, beyond the teachings in our Jewish tradition that give me the faith to hope, there are "concrete" reasons as well. When I was still with Rabbis for Human Rights we conducted opinion polls in May 2013 and April 2016. We learned that, while a majority of Israeli Jews believe the Bedouin are "taking over the Negev," they thought outstanding Bedouin land claims were fair when they learned that these claims amount to only 5.4 percent of the Negev. In the more recent study we saw that a clear majority believe that we should be fair to our fellow citizens, should not move them against their will, etc. Almost every single Israeli Jew says we have the most moral army in the world because that is what they aspire to. It is undeniable that we have acted as oppressors and dispossessors on both sides of the Green Line. That is why my current NGO, "*Haqel* (The Field)—Jews and Arabs in Defense of Human Rights" has helped create the "Four Villages Campaign" on behalf of villages on both sides of the border all in imminent danger of being entirely destroyed. However, when we strip away the disinformation, and expose my fellow Israelis to the facts, these polls show that our truer and higher selves can emerge.

I remain optimistic because polls like these reinforce my belief that my fellow Israelis are not incorrigible human rights violators. Rather, as beings created in God's Image they need to take a look in the mirror that is God (perhaps that is why the Hebrew word for prayer means to judge one's self). With all of the frustrations and sometimes physical risk involved, I have seen the wall I constantly beat my head against occasionally break. I know that "*Lo hamidrash ikar, eleh hamaaseh*" (actions speak louder than words). Now more than ever, our beliefs must be translated into concrete action. *Tikkun Olam* (being partners with God in repairing and sanctifying the world) is holding up the mirror that is God to our fellow Israelis and saying, "We know you aspire to be just and decent, but you need a reality check. If you are willing to look in the mirror, you are not going to like what you see. We can do better." ■

Israel, Palestine, and the Language of Genocide

BY MARK LEVINE AND ERIC CHEYFITZ

THE ISRAELI OCCUPATION of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip has now reached the half-century mark. There is little, if any, chance in the foreseeable future that Palestinians will achieve even a small measure of independence, sovereignty, or statehood; never mind a measure of political rights in a Greater Israel.

As Israel intensifies its control over the Occupied Territories, the violations of international law that have long been at the heart of the Occupation continue to grow in number, kind, and scope. At the same time, Israeli religious, political, and military leaders make increasingly racist statements that call into question the possibility of the Zionist state ever coming to terms with Palestinians.

The list of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by Israel includes torture, kidnapping, human shields, theft (of land, money, and resources), denial of education, collective punishment, detention without trial, home demolitions, extrajudicial executions, imprisonment of minors, a massive settlement complex, and even worse from the perspective of international law, persecution on political, racial, ethnic and religious grounds, and racism. Even Apartheid is increasingly accepted as a legitimate legal description of Israeli rule in the Occupied Territories.

But there is one label that still elicits intense opposition even among progressive critics of Israel—genocide. We know the reason why. For Jews, genocide was, is, and will always be primarily associated with the Holocaust. Only crimes involving the highest level of death and destruction justify such a judgment. Cambodia, Bosnia, Rwanda, Darfur, perhaps the Yazidis. But Israel? The Occupation might be brutal, but who besides an anti-Semite would suggest Israel has committed genocide against Palestinians?

This understanding of genocide as encompassing only extreme levels of mass murder is why last year's invocation of the term by the Movement for Black Lives (M4BL), in criticizing the Occupation in the explanatory text of its manifesto, caused a firestorm of criticism. And yet not all Jews oppose the use of the term. Jewish Voice for Peace, the Jews of Color Caucus, historian Ilan Pappé, and the Center for Constitutional Rights (headed until his death about a year ago by attorney Michael Ratner), among others, have all supported, to a greater or lesser degree, the use of the term in the Israel/Palestine case, as have some of the world's leading scholars of international humanitarian law.

With the 50th anniversary of the Occupation now upon us we believe it is crucial to assess the accusation of genocide in a dispassionate and objective manner. The problem with engaging in such an assessment is that for all its power—indeed, because of it—the term genocide does not have one agreed upon meaning. Rather, its legal, sociological, political, and polemical meanings overlap at points while also diverging significantly today and over time.

As enshrined in the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, "genocide can be carried out through acts against individuals, when the ultimate intent is to annihilate the entire group composed of these individuals." Enshrined in Articles II and III of the Convention, genocide comprised both a "mental" and a "physical" element and was defined as the "intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group, as such." While the level of death and destruction does not have to encompass most or even a majority of members of a protected group, the violence does have to be of sufficient extent to threaten to change its "pattern of life." This basic definition has held true in the ensuing seven decades, including most recently in the Rome Statute of 1998 to establish an International Criminal Court (ICC).

It is worth noting here that since the coining of the term by the Polish Jewish scholar Raphael Lemkin in the 1930s

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there have been serious debates over what kinds of crimes should be included in the legal definition of genocide, with "cultural" and "political" genocide as well as "ethnic cleansing" being deliberately omitted from the definition in the Convention. Even as international law developed, countries remained averse to apply the term: the United States in particular opposed labeling the two generative cases of genocide in the post-Cold War era—Yugoslavia and Rwanda—as such because doing so would impose legal obligations to intervene to stop it.

Nevertheless, the legal understanding of genocide has gradually developed and become more nuanced, recognizing in the words of the International Court of Justice's 's(ICJ) 2007 decision in *Croatia v. Serbia*, that "the required intent [for genocide] is not limited to the intent to physically destroy the group, but includes also the intent to stop it from functioning as a unit." Similarly, as Martin Shaw argued in a well known exchange with Omer Bartov with specific reference to the 1948 War: "Genocidal action aims not just to contain, control, or subordinate a population, but to shatter and break up its social existence. Thus genocide is defined, not by a particular form of violence, but by general and pervasive violence."

In Shaw's view, Zionist/Israeli actions during the war, both in terms of the broader ethnic cleansing of Palestine and in the context of the multiple massacres of civilians, reveal an "incipiently genocidal mentality" that reflected the "settler colonial" and "exclusivist nationalis[t]" character of Zionist and then Israeli identity, ideologies, and policies. The combination of underlying intentions and ideology with the acts of exceptional violence against civilian populations (especially the mass killings and/or destruction of more or less entire villages epitomized by the Deir Yassin massacre and the battle for Lydda), the deprivation of Palestinians' fundamental right of self-determination, the dispersal of the majority of the population, and the destruction of almost every national institution, taken together could arguably be described as genocidal.

Even if a claim could be made about 1948, that would not impact the question of Israel's present treatment of Palestinians without a significant amount of legal precedent being established. The present claims that Israel has committed genocide against Palestinians, particularly those made with reference to the siege, invasions, and bombings in Gaza (which seem to be what most of the accusations of genocide refer to), are focused primarily on its ongoing occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, and have to be assessed legally as such, not merely with reference to past crimes.

Israel's contemporary record is routinely laid out in all its ingloriousness by local and international human rights organizations (including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, B'Tselem, Adalah, the Palestine Center for Human Rights, al-Haq, Peace Now's Settlement Watch, Defense of Children International), as well as by the United Nations and the U.S. State Department. All provide strong evidence that Israel has committed innumerable war crimes and crimes against humanity, routinely violating even the broadest interpretations of the principles of distinction and proportionality.

"The legal understanding of genocide has gradually developed and become more nuanced."

Israel's actions in the Occupied Territories are defined, as the ICJ has described it, by "impunity across the board." These actions and the policies on which they are based clearly have reached the level to meet the standard for such international crimes as persecution, colonialism, racial discrimination, and even apartheid. At the same time, there is little doubt that Palestinians constitute a protected ("national") group under the Genocide and other Conventions, and so no expansion of the kinds of communities who could be protected by international humanitarian law in this regard is necessary.

However, the manner in which the Genocide Convention was written and the subsequent case law strongly suggests that despite the heinous and ongoing nature of Israel's actions in the Occupied Territories, it would be practically impossible to prosecute any Israeli leaders or state-sponsored individuals for the crime of genocide. Quite simply, the number of people killed and their percentage in the larger Palestinian population, or even in the regions in which they live, are nowhere close to the levels that have occurred in conflicts where genocide prosecutions have taken place.

Even if we focus on the most recent and bloody conflicts in decades, in Gaza in 2008-09 and 2014, for which accusations of genocide against Israel repeatedly have been made, the numbers of civilian deaths (approximately nine hundred in 2008-09 and fifteen hundred in 2014) reflect a miniscule portion of the total Palestinian population of the Strip, never mind all of historic Palestine and/or the Diaspora. All told, the number of Palestinians killed by Israel during the last fifty years constitutes less than one percent of the worldwide Palestinian population today. Over 300,000 Gazans would have to have died in the recent wars, and over ninety percent of the Occupied Territories' population and two thirds of the region's Palestinian population, to reach levels of death comparable to the percentages seen in World War II, Yugoslavia,

A New Occupation

Fouad Agbaria | Courtesy of Zawyeh Gallery

or Rwanda, to cite just three examples of internationally agreed-upon cases of genocide.

If we move beyond the number of Palestinians killed by Israel to other aspects of life under occupation, including the decade-long siege of Gaza (which is an illegal form of collective punishment and a crime against humanity), the Occupation clearly has taken a high toll on Palestinian economic, social, and political development and has brought with it many problems related to lack of (in fact de-) development (including malnutrition and numerous illnesses). But even after more than a half-century of occupation, Palestinian society remains surprisingly vibrant and resilient, a "lower middle income" country whose levels of human development have increased significantly in the last four decades.

We do not argue that these figures somehow indicate a beneficent Israeli rule—far from it. Moreover, the conditions of life in Palestinian refugee camps, particularly outside historical Palestine, remain far more severe than those within the Occupied Territories. But we do not think, in combination with Israel's actions in 1948, that these policies constitute even "incremental genocide," as Israeli historian Ilan Pappé has argued, or "cold genocide" as defined by Dutch genocide scholar Kjell Anderson because of the combination of a lack of expressed intention combined with the comparatively small number of deaths. The relevant case law and judicial decisions, particularly the copious discussions of the International Criminal Tribunals in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda and other tribunals and investigations, strongly suggest that such discussions would not support an accusation against Israel for genocide *in the present legal environment and interpretive framework*.

Indeed, given that increasing numbers of Americans and Europeans are now willing to consider Israeli culpability for other war crimes and crimes against humanity, including Apartheid, we urge that strong and concerted efforts be made to build both the legal and public case for such prosecutions. We also believe that in this context, a focus on accusing Israel of genocide remains strategically counterproductive because it would drain energy away from the intensive work necessary to gain a decision on these other

serious international crimes, unite adversaries and those still skeptical of Palestinian claims against Israel while alienating precisely the public and political audiences that would need to support such accusations in order to build enough groundswell to force the politically cautious tribunals to consider Israeli crimes.

As important, we fear that doing so in the current circumstances could, like the boy who cried wolf, prove disastrous if Israel's increasingly fanatical leadership sees the allegations as opportunities to extend the violence even further, and turns the increasingly genocidal language pervading the country's political culture to actual policies and actions towards Palestinians.

A second option is to engage in the much longer-term work of changing the accepted legal definition of genocide to include actions that do not meet the standard today. Genocide surely has both sociological and legal definitions and meanings. But we are not talking about sociological arguments here; the Israeli Occupation is first and foremost a legal regime. If it is going to be defeated, it will be on the basis of law, not sociology. But at the same time, we need to consider how the legal term can evolve—first through its development within sociological, political, and legal theory (where it is easier to expand on its meaning), and then through the gradual application of newer interpretations and concepts by the ICC and other judicial bodies in actual cases.

In this regard, a look at the historic and ongoing experiences of Native Americans, a community that has suffered from some of the most pervasive experiences of genocide in history, in fact calls into question morally and politically the dominant understandings of the concept, particularly surrounding the complex and highly problematic and changing nature of the relationships between "race," "biology," and culture in the definitions of genocide that are considered legally meaningful. We note that the biologization of race occurred beginning in the eighteenth century through the rise of "scientific racism," used to justify Europe's claim to superiority in its imperial and colonial ventures, particularly vis-à-vis native peoples in the Americas.

But if we accept that race is not primarily a biological category, and is clearly inseparable from culture, then "genocide" must necessarily apply to the cultural destruction of a group as well as to its physical destruction. The case of Native Americans in the lower forty-eight states of the U.S. is instructive here. There is little doubt that the level of death and destruction marks the experience of Native Americans as one of genocide; but it is worth noting that it has never been officially labeled as such, nor are the U.S. or other governments going to acknowledge such a designation in the near future, given the profound ethical, political, and perhaps even legal ramifications of such an admission.

But since the end of the nineteenth century, the continued genocide of Indians in the United States has been accomplished by means other than the physical obliteration that continued until the massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890. This includes, for example, forced assimilation through the boarding-school system that lasted from the late nineteenth through the mid-twentieth century, the forced sterilization of Native women in the 1970s, the transfer of Native children to non-Native families (partially brought to an end in 1978 with the passage of the Indian Child Welfare Act), denial of federal recognition for tribes, and the dis-enrolling of tribal members by the tribe itself.

"The question raised here is: at what point does the destruction of a culture that constitutes a group's identity amount to genocide?"

The question raised here is: at what point does the destruction of a culture that constitutes a group's identity (e.g., traditional values such as language and patterns of interaction with members of the group through the bonds of extended kinship) amount to genocide? Simply put, can genocide be committed without the physical destruction of the group or even part of the group, even though historically physical destruction has paved the way for cultural destruction? In fact, the Islamic State's policy of large scale cultural destruction as a prelude for physical extermination, and the guilty plea of a Malian jihadi at the ICC to the destruction of cultural heritage (the first prosecution of its kind), point to the growing importance of focusing on culture as an element of genocide.

Even if we stick to the aspect of physical destruction, on the question of the "scale of destruction" of the victimized group, there are problems attempting to delineate, in the absence of large scale murders or similar atrocities, what constitutes what the ICJ terms enough people to be "emblematic [that is, representative] of the overall group, or . . . essential to its survival, [which] may support a finding that the part qualifies as substantial within the meaning of Article IV." Specifically, how can we determine whether or not a part of the group under consideration is "emblematic"?

During the more than century-long Navajo-Hopi Land Dispute, for example, approximately twelve to fourteen thousand Navajos were forcibly removed from their ancestral homes. The effects of this removal were devastating in psychological, social, and cultural terms to these people as land in Native cultures is considered part of the kinship

nexus, a living entity. Among these Navajo families are some of the most traditional Navajos, who are repositories of the historical culture. Do we, then, consider this "part" of the population of over 300,000 Navajos "emblematic"? Certainly it is not in terms of numbers. But what are the effects of this removal on Navajo culture?

What the Navajo-Hopi experience tells us is that while there may seem to be good reason for the legal definition of genocide to be tied to demography and mass murder, in fact the purpose of the term genocide—to prevent the forced "disappearance" and disaggregation of self-defined human communities—calls for a reconsideration of the relationship between both identity markers such as race, biology, and culture, and between physical and cultural causal factors in the forced disappearance of communities as functioning groups. The Native American experience, then, is important for any discussion of the Occupation because it forces us to consider the implications of genocide accusations that don't rely on a focus on just large scale killings of long periods. While physical violence, even of merely an "emblematic" rather than proportionally large share of a group, is a primary means of genocide, it's not the only one.

However, even if we agree that there has been no genocide of the Palestinian people during the Occupation, the question today can be raised as to whether the State or government of Israel has advocated or called for genocide according to the legal understanding of these terms. While it would today remain nearly impossible to successfully obtain a judgment of genocide, incitement is quite another matter. In recent years, several Israeli officials and leading media outlets have suggested the state's "right" to eradicate Palestinians, and have called for large-scale murder and even genocide of Palestinians. Indeed, the recently appointed Chief Army Rabbi, Eyal Qarim, has explicitly advocated the rape of "gentile women"—in this case Palestinians—while the current Justice Minister, Ayelet Shaked, declared that "the entire Palestinian people is the enemy" and called for its destruction "including its elderly and its women, its cities and its villages, its property and its infrastructure." Shaked's statement is an unambiguous call for genocide, and similar calls are being made by senior Israeli officials who directly shape the policies of the government and influence attitudes of soldiers towards Palestinians.

Article III of the 1948 Convention lists "[d]irect and public incitement to commit genocide" as a punishable crime, if not genocide itself. As the United States Holocaust Museum declares, "public incitement to genocide can be prosecuted *even* if genocide is never perpetrated." The power of this language and incitement is clear when we consider how ubiquitous calls for "death to Arabs" have become, or the desire to turn Gaza into "a parking lot" among ordinary Israelis. With each passing year, accusations of incitement to commit genocide are becoming increasingly plausible, especially when linked to large-scale crimes actually committed in the assaults on Gaza.

Incitement to commit genocide is not the same thing as genocide proper, however. As William Schabas explains in the introduction to his generative work *Genocide in International Law*, "For decades, the Genocide Convention has been asked to bear a burden for which it was never intended, essentially because of the relatively underdeveloped state of international law dealing with accountability for human rights violations . . . This has changed in recent years." What Schabas is suggesting is that as the international legal and political environment changes, there is room for the legal understanding and meaning of genocide to evolve further.

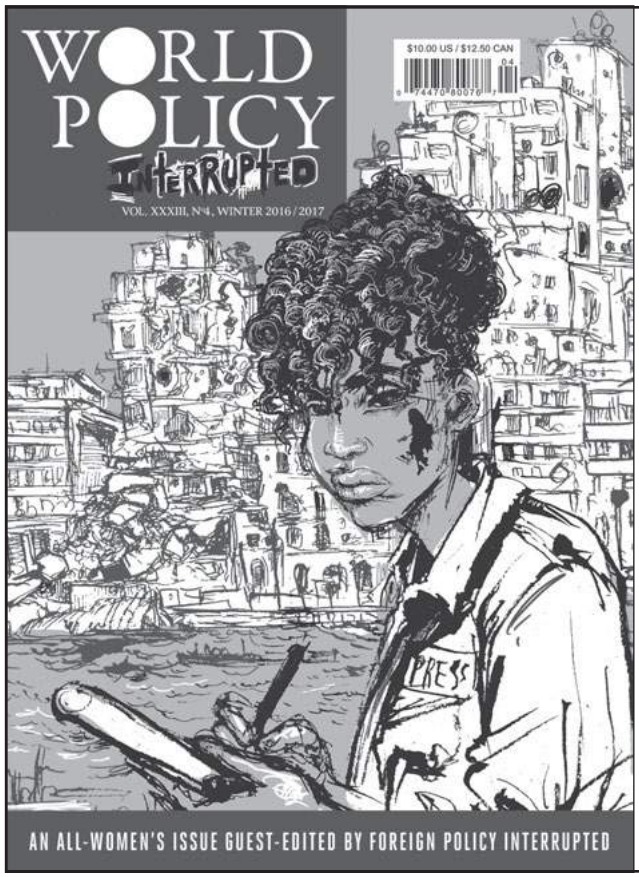
But in order for this to occur, legal scholars need to spend a lot more effort both expanding their empirical and epistemological understandings of types of genocide that presently fall outside the international legal discourse. In this context, it is worth noting that if there has been little expansion of the legal definition of genocide since 1948, sociologically speaking the concept has been greatly expanded. Concepts such as "politicide" or "ethnocide," which were explicitly left out of the Convention, have gained increasing acceptance among scholars, policymakers, and the public. Israeli sociologist Baruch Kimmerling used the concept politicide, rather than genocide, to describe Israel's clear aim and successful execution of long-term policies geared to "the dissolution of the Palestinian people's existence as a legitimate social, political, and economic entity" by preventing any possibility of Palestinians achieving sovereignty and independence in their own nation-state.

As we discussed above, the mechanisms through which the decimation of Native Americans proceeded and their oppression continues to raise the question: Can genocide be committed without the (likely or deliberately intended) physical destruction of the group or even part of the group? In current Bolivian and Ecuadorian law over which indigenous peoples in both countries have had a significant influence, the land is accorded human rights. To kill the land (and from an indigenous perspective one way of killing it is to turn it into property), then, is to commit genocide. Similarly reasoned, one of the charges articulated by the Native resisters to the Dakota Access Pipeline is "environmental genocide." Given the threats to large swaths of humanity by our treatment of the environment (never mind burning of fossil fuels), there is little doubt that environmental genocide can lead to physical extermination for millions. The question, as always, remains in the end, who makes the law and who gets to interpret it?

In light of increasingly open and public comments by Israeli officials in policy-making positions calling for rape, mass murder, dehumanization, and other international crimes against Palestinians, accusations of *incitement to commit genocide* are becoming increasingly plausible, especially when

linked to large scale crimes involved in the assaults on Gaza (which Israel perpetually threatens to make far more deadly with each new attack). While not genocide proper, these are "inchoate" crimes that demand immediate action from the international community to prevent from being actualized. We would strongly advise the legal, institutional, and geopolitical foundation of and groundwork for such a case be pursued through the ICJ and ICC. At the very least, as the ongoing impact of the 2004 ICJ Advisory Opinion on the West Bank "wall" demonstrates, if a mandated UN body such as the General Assembly (which requested the 2004 opinion) could be convinced to request an ICJ opinion, the resulting investigation into all the issues raised in this essay would go a long way towards clarifying the international judicial understanding of Israel's conduct as the Occupation passes the half-century mark. At the same time, Security Council Resolution 2334 of December 23, 2016, which expressly declared the entire settlement enterprise "devoid of legality" and "demanded" Israel stop all "settlement activities" could also go a long way to bringing the conflict directly to the ICC and/or ICJ.

Ultimately, broadening the sociological understandings and through them legal definitions of genocide will play an important role in the struggles to compel Israel, the United States, and far too many other governments—the Russians, Iranians, the Assad government in Syria, the Saudi "coalition" (in which the U.S. and UK play leading roles) in Yemen—to end their long-term, systematic oppression of brutalized populations and behave in compliance with international law. But before that can occur, a lot more groundwork needs to be laid, and activists should consider the political and strategic costs of accusing governments of genocide before the legal and political environment exists for such an accusation to bear fruit. ■



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A Lifeline to the Values We Hold Sacred

BY SUHAD BABAA

As we arrive at 50 years of Israel's occupation of Palestinians in the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem, and as some of the most extreme right-wing, hate-filled voices take the helm at the highest levels of office in Israel, the United States, Europe, and beyond, we're all being called to ask: what propels us forward? As a Palestinian, Korean, American queer woman who has had her sundry identities questioned and sometimes disparaged, my motivation has always been clear: to uphold the inherent freedom, dignity, and equality of every human being. If we are to change the historical tide in Palestine and Israel, we must start by finding expressions of those values and amplifying them around the world.

Just Vision, the organization I lead, is charged with doing just that—putting up a media megaphone to the Palestinian and Israeli activists, journalists, and human rights defenders who put their bodies and lives on the line to demand change in the face of inequality and injustice. This work is vital because the extent of grassroots activism and the degree of exposure it receives simply doesn't match up, a result of the mainstream media's too frequent emphasis on sensationalist violence at the expense of movements for values-based change. Moreover, on the rare occasion that outlets do cover these stories, they are too often riddled with misrepresentations and render communities' concerns invisible.

Our responsibility is to create compelling, accurate media and build networks of support that amplify voices of dissent who are pushing beyond the margins and willing to think, act, and organize creatively in their pursuit of a just, free, and equal future. I know that our work—and that of the many organizations, teams, and individuals in this field—is having an effect. At Just Vision, we're starting to get hard evidence that it is doing what we hoped.

Our team created the feature-length documentary film *Budrus* with two explicit goals: putting Palestinian and Israeli resistance efforts at the center of local and international conversation about the conflict, and building the capacity of nonviolent activists in the field. The film tells the story of a Palestinian community organizer who succeeded in uniting Palestinians of all factions together with Israelis in a nonviolent movement to save his village of Budrus from destruction by Israel's Separation Barrier.

Two years after *Budrus'* release, StrategyOne, a daughter company of the public relations firm Edelman, conducted an independent media audit to assess the film's impact on the discourse about Palestinian-led nonviolent resistance in mainstream English-language press. The results showed that coverage prior to the release of the film characterized the protests in *Budrus* as riots and disturbances of the peace. After the launch of the film, most of the media coverage described the events in *Budrus* as a nonviolent struggle initiated by the residents to save their lands and olive trees. The findings showed that the film not only put *Budrus* on the map, but successfully shifted the media narrative around the protests from one of riots to one of a strategic nonviolent campaign. In fact, in the two years following the film's release, the key messages we set out to tell through the story of *Budrus* had a 91 percent message penetration rate across English-language coverage.

> **This is a small demonstration of the power of transformative media**

This is a small demonstration of the power of transformative media in the pursuit of freedom, equality, and dignity. In a context where structural inequality and systematic racism has shaped not only 50 years of military occupation, but nearly 70 years of dispossession and subjugation, paying attention to and supporting Israeli and Palestinian activists, journalists, and human rights defenders is part of our shared work across progressive movements in the world. Because the work of the grassroots is not only necessary—it is a lifeline to the values we hold sacred. ■

SUHAD BABAA is the Executive Director at Just Vision, an organization dedicated to increasing media coverage and support for Palestinian and Israeli grassroots leaders working to end the Occupation and build a future of freedom, dignity and equality for all.

At 50 We Dare Not Give Up

BY ARYEH COHEN

We seem to be at an intersection of incompetence and invidiousness as we draw closer to the fiftieth anniversary of the Occupation. We are almost to the point that both right and left agree that the term "occupation" should no longer be used. On the right, the argument is either for stasis—building out the settlements and expanding the area controlled by settlers; pressing the Palestinians economically and geographically until they leave or surrender—or, legally annex the territory and bestow limited rights upon the Palestinians. On the left, the call is now for recognizing the de facto annexation and granting full political rights to the Palestinian residents.

The political powers in Israel and Palestine are in a state of constant strategic dithering —one step forward and two steps back. Yet, lest we fall into the false equivalency of occupier and occupied, it must be stated that this stasis is the result of a strategy of many decades on the part of the Israeli government to deprive the Palestinians in the territories of the resources for economic sustainability or the room for civic institutions. The security apparatus which controls the movement of the Palestinians on a daily basis raises the price of resistance so high that it seems futile, resulting in only sporadic but heroic acts of nonviolent resistance.

The cycle of armed belligerence which scales up or down but almost never dies out, is a result of the logic of violence. The combatants and their institutions on both sides are convinced that the other side only understands violence, and if *we* hit *them* hard enough this time, they will stop.

The gross incompetence and moral turpitude of the Trump administration does not offer any hope. The nomination of David Friedman (a de facto spokesperson for the most right-wing of settlers, who denies that there is an occupation, and has characterized J Street as "worse than kapos") as U.S. Ambassador to Israel reinforces one's conviction that

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Mourners at the funeral of 50-year-old Aviram Reuven who was killed in a stabbing attack by a Palestinian man in 2015.

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A Palestinian protestor tries to break a portion of the separation wall in Abu Dis in October 2015.

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Trumpian diplomacy is of the "throw more gas on a fire" variety. We can no longer even fool ourselves into thinking that the U.S. might pressure the parties to come to a deal. We are at another in a long series of crisis moments.

The American Jewish community, however, should not be silent. We must demand from the institutional Jewish community that they withdraw support from the Occupation and its daily toll on human life. This demand might be translated into a number of different demands. We must demand that our educational institutions (from day schools through Hillels and summer camps) should stop all educational programs to Israel (exchange programs, semester in Israel programs, tour programs, summer programs) which accept the reality of the Occupation as a neutral activity. This means either cancelling that day trip to Ofrah, or accompanying it with a speaker from *Breaking the Silence*, or *Machsom Watch*, or another human rights or anti-occupation NGO. All Israeli education must include a "dual narrative" type program which presents the Palestinian narrative of the past century and a half side by side with the Zionist narrative. The Jewish Federation of North American and the boards of Rabbis in cities nationwide should abide by the same guidance when they sponsor visits to Israel for politicians or donors.

AIPAC spends a large amount of money literally wining and dining rabbinic students so that they will accept the Leffell Israel Fellowship, which includes a free trip to Israel and a free trip to the AIPAC policy conference. We should encourage our students not to apply for the fellowship for an organization who gave a platform and an 18,000-strong standing ovation to candidate Trump—legitimizing his racist, xenophobic, misogynistic views to the "pro-Israel" community. Our rabbinic schools, and graduate schools of Jewish education should cut any official ties with the organization.

We are entering what will probably be a very dark time for democracy in the United States. Jews are not the first people who will be impacted, though we have seen a spike in all manner of hate crimes—including hate crimes fueled by anti-Semitism. As a community we must stand together with other communities who will be directly impacted by the policies of a Trump administration—the undocumented, the Muslim community, people of color, refugee communities, and the LGBTQ community.

At the same time we must be vigilant that our community, the Jewish community, not fall victim to Trumpian ruses of pro-Israelism to ignore a worsening human rights situation in Israel/Palestine. We must follow the example of IfNotNow and keep the pressure up on our communal institutions with creative, nonviolent direct actions. Those of us with privilege and access in the Jewish community must leverage that privilege to apply pressure to the institutional Jewish community and to support creative nonviolent direct actions.

Most importantly, we must retain our focus. "The day is short, the work is great," *Pirkei Avot* says. We must not be lazy, we must heed the cry of the Force of the Universe: "Zion will be redeemed with justice." ■

When Anti-Zionism Becomes Anti-Semitism and Zionism Becomes Anti-Palestinian

BY ELLI TIKVAH SARAH

Is anti-Zionism anti-Semitism? This question flared up in the British Labour Party in April 2016 and led to an internal inquiry.

We Jews ourselves don't agree about whether or not anti-Zionism is anti-Semitism. Zionism emerged as a political movement in Europe in the late nineteenth century in response to anti-Semitism. For Theodore Herzl and other exponents of Zionism, the establishment of a Jewish state was the only solution to the persistence of anti-Jewish persecution in the diaspora.[1] Nevertheless, not all Jews at the time agreed with the Zionist argument. Many Jews in Eastern Europe, for example, rejected Jewish nationalism in favour of international socialism, hence the establishment of the *Bund*—shorthand for the General Jewish Workers' Union in Lithuania, Poland, and Russia. Prior to the *Sho'ah*, many orthodox groups opposed Zionism because as they saw it, the redemption of Zion was dependent on the Divine Will and the coming of the Messiah. Furthermore, until the establishment of the State of Israel, progressive Judaism rejected Zionism from the diasporic standpoint that the people Israel best fulfill the prophetic vision of being 'a light unto the nations'[2] by living amongst the nations. Since the establishment of the State of Israel, while many orthodox Jews are Zionists, many ultra-orthodox Jewish denominations remain vehemently opposed to Zionism. Meanwhile, today, Jewish Socialists, radical Jews of different persuasions, including many of those involved in *Tikkun's* movement of spiritual progressives, reject Zionism, both because they don't feel Zionism is the best way to protect the Jewish people in the twenty-first century and because they believe that nationalism of all kinds must be transcended in order to address global issues, such as the environmental crisis.

Clearly, these Jewish expressions of anti-Zionism are not motivated by anti-Semitism; notwithstanding the ultra-Zionist vilification that such positions derive from internalized anti-Semitism. What then could be helpful criteria for identifying an anti-Zionist position as anti-Semitic? I suggest three potential candidates. First: the unilateral rejection of Jewish nationalism alone among the nationalisms of the world, and the targeting of Zionism for special condemnation. Second: this exclusive preoccupation with Israel and demonization of the Jewish state becoming enmeshed with historic anti-Semitic tropes about Jewish power. Third: the presentation of Zionism as a form of European colonialism without any understanding or recognition of how the Zionist movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was a response to the rise of a new malevolent form of racist anti-Semitism in Europe.

Unfortunately, a series of controversial incidents and statements involving figures in the British Labour Party in April 2016 met the second of these criteria. The particular incident, which led many Jews and non-Jews to call for an inquiry concerned the revelation that Labour MP Naz Shah had retweeted a tweet that suggested Israel be relocated to the United States. Within the living memory of British Jews, Europe was made *Judenfrei* (Jew-free) or *Judenrein* (clean of Jews) as the Jews who lived in European states were systematically deported to ghettos and concentration camps, and murdered in death camps in Eastern Europe. After the defeat of Hitler, those who survived the horror

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A protest by Israelis and Palestinians against the Occupation on road 60 near the town of Beit Jala in the West Bank in April 2016.

Oren Ziv | Activestills

became "displaced persons," the majority of whom were collected into camps—most notably on Cyprus—with nowhere to go. To suggest that the State of Israel, which became the principal place of refuge for those Jews who survived the *Sho'ah*—and often the only place to take them in—should be relocated to the USA raised again the spectre of a land being made *Judenrein*. Furthermore, in aligning Israel with the USA without any grasp of the substantial Mizrachi population of Israel which has neither contemporary or historic links to the USA or Europe, the tweet revealed a normative ignorance of the complexity of the populations which inhabit the region: Jews, Arabs, Arab Jews, Palestinians, Palestinian Israelis, Jewish Arabs, Israeli Jews—to name but seven identity designations.

Within, but also beyond the British Labour Party, many progressives throughout Britain are similarly ill-informed and retain a mono-focus on Israel, ignoring for example, the likes of China, which has occupied Tibet since it invaded that country in 1950. Perhaps, both the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and the British Mandate from 1920-1948, which established a particular connection between Britain and the land on the eastern seaboard of the Mediterranean, helps to explain the preoccupation on the part of British progressives with Israel's wrongs. Nevertheless, the justifications used for a BDS (Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions) campaign do not obviate the issues involved in targeting Israel. Firstly, in general it is possible to single out a nation and try to force change by using economic leverage, as was the case with Apartheid South Africa. But is this a morally sound option when the nation you are targeting for boycott includes former refugees and displaced persons, generally victims of persecutory and genocidal regimes and their children, where part of their experience of being targeted involved the very measures now being proposed: boycotts of businesses, and social, cultural, and educational isolation?

Secondly, the linking of the boycott of Apartheid South Africa in the 1970s and 80s with the BDS campaign against Israel today generates an erroneous comparison between the two states. Quite apart from the fact that the Apartheid system of white supremacy was specific to South Africa, the white ruling class were the descendants of British and Dutch colonialists. By contrast, from 722 BCE through 1948, the historic Kingdom of Israel, and subsequently, the Kingdom of Judah, were conquered by successive empires: Assyrian, Babylonian, Greek, Assyrian-Greek, Roman, Christian and Ottoman—and then administered by the British after the collapse of Ottoman rule. No matter how fraught the connection, Jews through the generations have proclaimed with the words of the Pesach Haggadah: "Next Year in Jerusalem!" and lamented for millennia the loss of the land, just as the Palestinians do today. Indeed, there are only Jews in the diaspora because we have been exiled from the land again and again. Where does this figure in the calculations of anti-Zionists? Furthermore, do the European nations offer us a right of return to the countries, cities, towns, and villages from whence we were expelled during the *Shoah*? And what did most of the nations of the world do to assist Jewish refugees escaping European mass murder?

So, anti-Zionism can indeed, and often is, a form of anti-Semitism. However, as I said before, of course this doesn't

mean that all forms of anti-Zionism are anti-Semitic. A more recent Jewish challenge to Zionism is that it is antithetical to the values found in the Torah. Of course, the Torah articulates a host of values in its five books that reflect narratives, legal codes, and descriptions of sacred worship written down and later edited over many centuries. Indeed, contradictory values contest with one another. For example, that the people Israel should maintain a completely separate existence from all other peoples in order to establish a society obedient to the will of a singular Warrior Deity[3] tussles with the demand for the practice of justice and compassion, in particular, towards the most marginal and vulnerable in society, including the sojourner. Those Jews, who reject Zionism, tend to value the latter position over the former. In *Va-yikra*, the Book of Leviticus, for example, we read in *parashat K'doshim*, which encompasses a host of ethical injunctions, in chapter 19, verse 34:

> The sojourners that sojourn with you shall be to you as the home-born among you, and you shall love them as yourself; for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt: I am the Eternal your God.

At first sight, when we apply this value to the State of Israel today, we learn that what makes the state Jewish is not its demography, but rather how it treats those who are not Jews. And yet, if we examine the verse more closely it becomes apparent that applying it to the contemporary conflict between Israelis and Palestinians involves characterizing the people Israel as 'the home-born' and unwittingly usurping the claim of Palestinians to also be the home-born, thereby reinforcing the division between 'us' and 'them' and undermining the right of *both* peoples to the land.

In the next parashah in Leviticus, in *B'har*, chapter 25, verse 23, we encounter a more radical statement:

> The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine. You are sojourners and settlers with Me.

If we are going to look to the Torah for teachings that challenge the status quo between Israelis and Palestinians today, this verse is a better candidate. It's not just that in the society to be established in the land, the sojourner is to be treated like the home-born; the land itself does not belong to anyone, not even to the home-born. Applied to the contemporary conflict, this verse equalizes the relationship between the two claimants: both peoples are sojourners and settlers in the land.

Martin Buber, who was an advocate of a binational homeland,[4] worked out the essential equality between the Israeli and Palestinian claims to the land in more detail in an open letter that he wrote to Mahatma Gandhi in 1939 before the outbreak of the Second World War. Buber composed the letter in response to Gandhi's position that 'Palestine belongs to the Arabs.' He wrote:[5]

> I belong to a group of people who from the time Britain conquered Palestine have not ceased to strive for the concluding of a genuine peace between Jew and Arab.
>
> By a genuine peace we inferred and still infer that both peoples together should develop the land without the one imposing its will on the other . . . We considered it a fundamental point that in this case two vital claims are opposed to each other, two claims of a different nature and a different origin which cannot objectively be pitted against one another and between which no objective decision can be made as to which is just, which unjust. . .
>
> . . . We considered and still consider it our duty to understand and to honor the claim which is opposed to ours and to endeavor to reconcile both claims.

Buber then tackles Gandhi's position that "Palestine belongs to the Arabs." Buber's examination of the assumption underlying Gandhi's statement gets to the heart of the conflict between these two competing claims to the land. He continues:

> What do you mean by saying a land belongs to a population? Evidently you do not intend only to describe a state of affairs by your formula, but to declare a certain right. You obviously mean to say that a people, being settled on the land, has so absolute a claim to that land that whoever settles on it without the permission of this people has committed a robbery.
>
> But by what means did the Arabs attain the right of ownership in Palestine? Surely by conquest—and in fact a conquest with intent to settle. You therefore admit that as a result their settlement gives them exclusive right of possession; whereas the subsequent conquests of the *Mamelukes* and the Turks, which were conquests with a view to domination, not to settlement, do not constitute such a right in your opinion, but leave the earlier conquerors in rightful ownership. Thus settlement by conquest justifies for you, a right of ownership of Palestine; whereas a settlement such as the Jewish—the methods of which, it is true, though not always doing full justice to Arab ways of life, were even in the most objectionable cases far removed from those of conquest—does not justify in your opinion any participation in this right of possession.

Buber reveals, as we can see, the myopia that frames any approach to the conflict between two equal claimants in terms of partiality for one claimant over the other. He then goes on to expose the absurdity of such a position:

> These are the consequences which result from your axiomatic statement that a land belongs to its population. In an epoch when nations are migrating, you would first support the right of ownership of the nation that is threatened with dispossession or extermination; but were this once achieved, you would be compelled, not at once, but after a suitable number of generations had elapsed, to admit that the land "belongs" to the usurper. . .

Finally, Buber presents a challenge to any people laying claim to any "portion of the earth":

> It seems to me that God does not give any one portion of the earth away, so that the owner may say as God says in the Bible: "For all the earth is Mine" (Exodus 19:5). The conquered land is, in my opinion, only lent even to the conqueror who has settled on it—and God waits to see what he will make of it.

Buber not only makes the best case I have ever heard for the just claims of both peoples to the strip of land between Lebanon and Egypt, on the eastern seaboard of the Mediterranean, he also helps us to see what nonsense it is to speak of any people being the rightful owners of a piece of land—unless they are, genuinely, an indigenous people. Progressive Jews of all persuasions might concur with Buber's analysis and his powerful advocacy on behalf of both the Jewish and Palestinian peoples.

So, what then of Zionism? There is no doubt that from the perspective of the Torah, the establishment of a just society on the part of the people Israel entails a land.[6] But there is also a deeper philosophical issue articulated throughout Jewish teaching concerning the relationship between the particular and the universal. Seen through the lens of historic Christian supremacist triumphalism, the Christian case against Judaism has been presented by a set of binary oppositions: law versus love, justice versus mercy, particularism versus universalism. In reality, Jewish teaching, which speaks of the one God of all the Earth, embraces law *and* love, justice *and* mercy, particularism *and* universalism: a particular piece of land *and* the whole world. It is our responsibility to practice justice wherever we live. Furthermore, just as "rest" has no meaning apart from "work," our awareness of the universal emerges out of particular experience. In the words of Rabbi Dr. Leo Baeck, the preeminent leader of German Jewry before and during the *Shoah*: "Every people is a question that God addresses to humanity . . . and every people . . . must answer for its own sake and for the sake of humanity."[7]

And so, just as the Jewish people are part of humanity, the particular bond between the Jewish people and the landforms an integral part of the Torah, our unique history, and our identity. We have sung and breathed the hope for Zion through every generation in every land of exile and settlement. Zionism is part of who we are. But how we create and re-create Zionism remains a choice. We must tackle all manifestations of anti-Jewish anti-Zionism and anti-Palestinian Zionism. One of the main objectives of the early Zionists was the "normalization" of the Jewish people. After centuries of a diaspora existence that entailed for the most part being forced into ghettos, denied the right to own land and to belong to skilled Guilds, the late nineteenth century Zionist dream was to be a nation just like other nations, in which a Jew would be free to pursue any kind of work occupation, and where Jews could live a "normal" life like other self-determining peoples. But "Zion" has become rather too "normal"—an oppressive state like many others, persistently denying the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. So, the issue today is whether or not "Zion" as a place of Return for the Jewish people, can become a space for *T'shuvah*, where two peoples make their home on equal terms.

To return to the anti-Semitism issue in the British Labour Party. The time has come for everyone on the left to challenge *all* the regimes of the world that are engaged in oppressing and occupying other peoples. As long as Israel alone is singled out for condemnation and that condemnation is articulated as "anti-Zionism," it is anti-Semitism. As long as the starting point of anti-Zionism is a unilateral rejection of the right of the Jewish people to self-determination, it is anti-Semitism. As long as anti-Zionism caricatures Zionism as just another European colonial enterprise, ignoring the age-old relationship of the Jewish people to the land on the eastern seaboard of Mediterranean, it is anti-Semitism. In place of the overwhelming predominance of non-constructive anti-Zionist rhetoric and demonization of Israel, with the 50th anniversary of the Occupation approaching, what is needed now, as Sam Bahour and Tony Klug argue, is that either the Occupation is dismantled so that an independent State of Palestine can be established, or that, pending a final, agreed resolution of the conflict, equal rights are extended to everyone living under Israel's rule.[8] Either way, the time has come for a concerted challenge to Israel to end the Occupation. ■

Notes

1. See Theodore Herzl's *Der Judenstaaat (The Jewish State), first published in 1896.*

2. Isaiah 47:6.

3. See, for example, the classic statement of the separate destiny of the people Israel in the Torah, Leviticus 18: 1-4. For a classic example of God as a warrior, see the Song of Moses, Exodus 15: 3-7.

4. See: *A Land of Two Peoples, Martin Buber on Jews and Arabs*, ed., Paul R. Mendes-Flohr (Oxford University Press, New York, 1983).

5. From: Martin Buber's 'Open Letter' to Gandhi Regarding Palestine (February 24, 1939) in Arthur Hertzberg, ed.,The Zionist Idea. (Jewish Publications Society, 1997), pp. 463-464.

6. Some examples from the legal codes of the Torah: Exodus 23: 1-12; Leviticus 19: 9-16; 33-37; Leviticus 23:22; Deuteronomy 24:14-22.

7. Quoted in *Forms of Prayer for Jewish Worship, Vol. 1 (Reform Synagogues of Great Britain, London, 1977, p. 404).*

8. See: 'Israel Can't Have It Both Ways. Recognize Palestine or Grant Equal Rights' by Sam Bahour and Tony Klug, *Tikkun*, October 26, 2015 See also: 'A Never Ending Occupation: The End of Hope?' by Tony Klug, *The Palestine-Israel Journal* Vol.21 No.3, 2016 / The Dual Legal System and 'After 50 Years: Save Israel, Stop the Occupation' by Izhak Schnell and Daniel Bar-Tal, *The Palestine-Israel Journal* Vol.21 No.3, 2016 / The Dual Legal System.

Born Into Occupation, Fighting for Basic Human Rights

BY ISSA AMRO

June 5, 2017 marks 50 years since the Naksa, or "setback," when Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza strip (2017 is also 69 years since the Nakba, or "catastrophe," when 700,000 Palestinians were ethnically cleansed from their homes and lands to make way for the establishing of the State of Israel). Qiryat Arba, the first Israeli settlement in the West Bank, was established in the outer Hebron area in 1968. Eleven years later the Beit Hadassah area of Hebron's Old City was taken over by settlers who squatted in buildings in order to take them over. The Israeli government later expanded the Beit Hadassah settlement and built a yeshiva. There are now 560,000 illegal Israeli settlers living the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Around 500 of these settlers live within Hebron's city center and an additional 7,000 are in Qiryat Arba.

I was born into Occupation in the old city of Hebron in 1980, thirteen years after the Occupation began. When I was a child, my father used to hold my hand tightly as we walked through Shuhada Street because it was so crowded. In 1994 Brooklyn-born Israeli settler Baruch Goldstein opened fire in the Ibrahimi mosque killing 29 Palestinians in worship and injuring some 120 more. In response to the massacre, the Israeli army boarded up and sealed shut Palestinian storefronts and homes on Shuhada Street. While settlers now roam freely on Shuhada Street, carrying machine guns, pistols, and other weapons, Palestinian families that live on the street have to use back doors, alleyways, and rooftops to enter their homes. The once vibrant marketplace where my father used to hold my hand now resembles a ghost town.

While politicians across the world are busy debating political solutions, things are escalating rapidly. Where once Israeli soldiers or police would arrest Palestinian youth attempting to carry out knife attacks they now perform extrajudicial executions, even after the youth has been disarmed and poses no threat. Injured Palestinian youth are left to bleed to death as they are denied any medical treatment. Settlements are being expanded and more areas are being declared closed military zones. In October, a speech by Israeli Minister of Education Naftali Bennett called for Israelis to give up their lives to annex the West Bank. And as of January 2016 there were 26 permanently-staffed checkpoints in the West Bank, causing severe restriction of movement for Palestinians who face lengthy delays as everyone is checked by the military. Twelve of these permanently-staffed checkpoints are in Hebron, where there are also roads split in the middle—one side for Jews and the other for Muslims. Last winter, a large area of Hebron was placed under closed military zone order. Extended family, friends, home repair professionals, and even medical professionals and ambulances were forbidden from entering.

In August 2016, the Israeli Civil Administration announced plans to expand the settlements in the south Hebron Hills, including in the contested village of Susiya. Also in the same month, the Israeli government approved the first new settlement housing units in the old city of Hebron in more than a decade. The 28 housing units for some 100 settlers will cause around a 10 percent increase in the settler population in the old city of Hebron and will come from Palestinian properties that were seized years ago by the Israeli government. The transfer of properties will be in direct contravention of international law. Netanyahu says he is defending Israel from Arab terrorists. However, this is not what the current conflict is about. Netanyahu and the current Israeli government leaders are not providing defense against Arab terrorists, but rather they are defending settlers and pro-settlement politicians. They are defending

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apartheid, discrimination, and Occupation. They are killing all of our hope for a good future and the achievement of a just peace and freedom for Palestinians.

The rapid proliferation of settlements is counter to any hope of a two-state solution. Meanwhile, conversations about a one-state/one-person one-vote are drowned in the reality of extrajudicial killings, settler violence with zero accountability, attacks on Israeli and Palestinian human rights defenders, and a legal system where Palestinians and Israelis are subject to different laws. Rather than engage in these political/philosophical debates about solutions, we must take concrete steps to secure basic human rights for Palestinians, implement international law, and protect the organizations and individuals working nonviolently for change.

In September 2016, Israel revised 18 charges against me as an attempt to stymie my human rights work and set a precedent of fear for other Palestinian human rights defenders. The charges, which date back to 2010 and include such things as organizing a demonstration and incitement, came as a reprisal and punishment for working with Israeli and American Jewish activists on a nonviolent action this past summer to restore an abandoned Palestinian factory and create a cinema to increase the infrastructure and life in Hebron's embattled central district. As a Palestinian I am being tried under Israeli military law, which has an over 99 percent conviction rate. Meanwhile, illegal settlers in the West Bank are subject to civil law.

The fight in Hebron is not a fight between Muslims and Jews over religion. Palestinians respect the Jewish holy sites in Hebron. We are proud of our grandfathers and grandmothers who protected Jews during the 1927 massacre. Jews are welcome in our city, but not as settlers or occupiers. I invite my Jewish friends to visit my house as welcome guests. It is my pleasure to show them historical and religious sights of the old city as well as the new city and bring them to meet Palestinian families and receive firsthand testimonies about what is happening in Hebron, rather than relying on stereotypes and media images.

While full equality, which necessitates a one-person one-vote system, is important, right now it is of the utmost importance that we focus on the dire situation unfolding before our eyes. As a Palestinian human rights defender, I need my Jewish and other allies in the U.S. and around the world to oppose the billions of dollars the U.S. is giving to Israel to maintain its system of apartheid and Occupation. I need them to demand accountability for acts of settler violence, to revoke the charity tax status of settlement financing organizations, such as the Brooklyn-based Hebron Fund, and to ensure that human rights defenders, such as myself, have protection from political persecution. ■

A demonstration against the closure of Shuhada Street in Hebron. The street was closed by the Israeli army in 1994 after a massacre by Baruch Goldstein, who killed 29 Palestinians inside the Al Ibrahimi Mosque.

Ahmad Al-Bazz | Activestills

50 Years of Occupation

Working Principles for Where We Go from Here

BY CHERIE R. BROWN

Fifty years of Israel's Occupation of Palestinian territories is a sobering anniversary that warrants a thoughtful reassessment. Over the years, many have tried to end the Occupation and resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Strategies for ending the conflict have included diverse tactics: forging relationships on the ground between Israelis and Palestinians, listening compassionately to the concerns of both sides, criticizing Israeli government policies, or pressing for sanctions against Israel with the goal of ending its government's oppressive practices. As we take stock of these past efforts, it may be useful to identify four guiding principles that may inform our work to end the Occupation as we move forward.

I. Practice Tough Love: Avoid Both Harshness or Liberalism Toward Israel

Many strategies to end the Occupation have treated Israel either with unrelenting harshness (i.e., blaming Israel as the source of the problem) or excessive liberalism (i.e., uncritically backing Israel's actions). Neither harshness nor liberalism is an effective strategy to change behavior.

A harsh response to the Occupation might be to ban all academic and cultural contacts with all Israelis, including Israelis engaged in peace efforts. A liberal response might be to condone Israel's actions, maybe privately voicing concerns, but not wanting to make any public condemnations. A liberal response might also include deciding that Israel is doing the best it can, that it is the victim in the situation, and that the primary problem lies with the Palestinians. Neither of these responses will end the Occupation.

Campaigns like Boycott, Divest, and Sanctions (BDS), which have the goal of isolating Israel, are particularly harsh. Moreover, they can have limited effectiveness because isolating Jews from the rest of the world has been a component of anti-Semitism for hundreds of years.

For some groups, African heritage people for example, one of the core mechanisms of their oppression entailed ripping families apart, which was a systematic strategy for maintaining control. Destroying Black families is one of the unconscionable legacies of slavery in the U.S. For many Black people, fighting against the history of racism means creating opportunities to increase family connections: holding family reunions; developing a culture of taking relatives in; and calling each other, even on first meeting, brother or sister. For Jews, one of the historic mechanisms of their oppression had an opposite dynamic. While racism tore African heritage families apart, anti-Semitism forced Jews together, isolating them into ghettoes, separating them from the rest of the world. Fighting against Jewish oppression means *ending* the isolation of Jews from other peoples. Political movements that have the goal of isolating Israel may fail to recognize that their approach is consistent with a primary component of anti-Semitism: the isolation of Jews from the rest of the world. The inherent weakness in a strategy to effect a change in Israel's policies by punishing it through isolation fails to recognize how isolation triggers experiences of anti-Semitism, rendering Jews (or Israelis) less able to think clearly, less able to come up with fresh solutions, and ultimately less able to find ways to end the Occupation.

In the context of working to end the Occupation, tough love may be an alternative to treating Israel either harshly or liberally. Tough love in this case means adopting a broader perspective. How can we respond to Israel with compassion while at the same time requiring accountability? How do we communicate that Israel is inherently good, never deserving sole blame for the conflict, while at the same time rigorously insisting that its oppressive policies must end? Practicing tough love that steers between harshness and liberalism may allow a way forward. Organizations like T'ruah or Rabbis for Human Rights are examples of groups that are deeply connected to Israel while holding Israel accountable for human rights violations.

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2. Understand the Role of Anti-Semitism in the Conflict

An understanding of anti-Semitism is key to ending the Occupation. Sorting out what is and is not anti-Semitic has kept many people, including committed activists, confused about Israel's role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Anti-Semitism may be complex, but it has one important, distinguishing characteristic: singling out Jews (or Israel) as solely responsible for a problem. In progressive circles, anti-Semitism may take the form of pitting other liberation groups against Jews (or Israel) based on one-sided narratives that summarily dismiss the legitimate concerns of Jews (or Israel). There is no doubt that the State of Israel horribly oppresses Palestinians, and fifty years of occupation is a tragedy. But exclusively blaming Israel for the conflict is a cause for concern because it not only undercuts a more nuanced analysis of the situation but it also divides liberation groups from each other by exploiting anti-Jewish sentiments.

An example may be helpful. In the final documents from the UN Conference on Racism in Durban, South Africa, in 2001, Israel was the only country in the world criticized for racism. Does Israel perpetrate racism? Yes. Is Israel the only racist country in the world? Absolutely not! The U.S. delegation walked out of the UN conference in Durban, stating it was doing so in support of Israel. It failed to mention, however, that walking out allowed the U.S. to avoid facing a pending resolution calling for the payment of reparations to descendants of slaves. Other liberation movements at the conference then directed their anger at Israel instead of focusing on the United States' historic responsibility for slavery. The constant attacks on Israel diverted the attention of the conference from its primary work of fighting racism.

Ignoring Israel's racism will not help resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or end the Occupation. But singling out Israel for condemnation perpetrates anti-Semitism, keeping other liberation groups from being able to identify and then fight against the conflict's broader causes.

3. Refrain from waging campaigns against groups that support Palestinian rights, even when there is disagreement with the policies or strategies of these groups

Waging campaigns against groups that promote BDS that speak for large numbers of Palestinians is not an effective long-range strategy because these attacks not only isolate Jews from other liberation groups but they also set Jews up against Palestinians. There has been so much controversy about the BDS campaign. Some claim that economic boycotts are the only way to force the Israeli government to end the Occupation. Others claim that the BDS movement is anti-Semitic and is calling for the end of Israel as we know it (particularly the policy in its platform that calls for the full right of return for all Palestinian refugees).

We can acknowledge many of the important goals of the BDS movement (e.g., ending the Occupation, fighting against the ongoing oppression of the Palestinian people) without a full endorsement of the campaign. Some economists claim that the boycott that BDS calls for has little chance to have enough of an economic impact on the Israeli people to bring about change; therefore, it might be primarily a symbolic gesture.

When I am unsure whether to support a particular policy, I find it helpful to examine the policy's impact on the ground. Based on my work with college students, the BDS campaign on university campuses has had a polarizing effect: increasing divisiveness between Jewish students and others, shutting down important conversations on Middle East politics, and espousing a doctrinaire perspective on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that forecloses the possibility for building important alliances.

The Occupation will not end without strong Jewish leadership working alongside strong Palestinian leadership at the center of any resolution. The BDS campaign in its current form undermines Jewish-Palestinian coalition building. But urging Jewish students on campus to focus their efforts on defeating BDS is not a viable long-range strategy to end the Occupation because it isolates them from other important progressive movements, such as Black Lives Matter, whose members understandably align with Palestinian groups. A better strategy is to train Jewish students on how to join forces with Black Lives Matter and Palestinian solidarity groups and while in partnership with these groups, confidently present an informed analysis of Jewish liberation, anti-Semitism, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Working to influence groups that support Palestinian rights, even when we strongly disagree with them, is preferable to attacking them.

4. Build Authentic One-On-One Relationships between Jews and Palestinians

Any strategy for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict needs to have one-on-one relationship building between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs at the center. We do not change a policy, a program, or a conflict. We change the people who support a policy, a program, or a conflict. There is no substitute for building personal relationships between Jews and Palestinians. Many Jews work assiduously for Middle East peace based on an ideological commitment, framing the issue in broad political terms, but they forego the hard work of making and maintaining close, authentic relationships

with Palestinians, which is an essential part of the process for bringing about peace. Activism without relationship building on both sides of the conflict is ineffective activism.

Based on my experience living in the U.S., Jewish activists often have an easier time building close, committed relationships with people of color who are not Palestinian. Many Jews in the U.S. were raised to fear Arabs. For example, I have a vivid memory of a synagogue rabbi coming to my Sunday school's seventh-grade classroom and telling us that Arabs were dangerous. (I challenged the rabbi's perspective and was sent home for speaking back to the rabbi!) I am sure Jewish children all over the U.S. heard similar misinformation about Arabs. Even though we no longer believe these distorted messages, we have internalized the negative attitudes, and despite our best efforts, they may affect our ability to build close relationships with Palestinians. Moreover, many Jews feel enormous guilt regarding Israel's oppression of Palestinians. Fear and guilt are not especially helpful in building and sustaining long-term relationships. Ending the Occupation requires the heroic act of making an authentic Palestinian friend.

Conclusion

It is long past time to end the Occupation. I have identified four principles to inform working toward that goal: (1) practicing tough love—having compassion for Israel while at the same time insisting on accountability for ending oppressive policies towards Palestinians; (2) understanding how anti-Semitism perpetuates the conflict; (3) building coalitions with Black Lives Matter and Palestinian solidarity groups while gaining allies for Jewish concerns; and (4) building authentic one-on-one relationships between Jews and Palestinians that can weather the turbulent ups and downs of the conflict. ■

BDS is the Peace Talks

BY ARIEL GOLD

The boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) movement is how we talk about the need for equal rights in Israel/Palestine. It is the most effective tool for ending the Occupation. As a rights-based approach it seeks to remedy the injustices that began in 1948, escalated in 1967, and continue to devastate the Palestinian people today. While engaging the international community in conversation about the inequality and human rights abuses Palestinians live under, BDS campaigns simultaneously have a direct effect to bring about a just, peaceful, and nonviolent solution to the conflict. Below are three examples of strategic BDS campaigns that engage and educate the public:

- CODEPINK's "Remodel RE/MAX: No 'Open House' on Stolen Land" campaign asks Denver-based real estate giant RE/MAX to stop allowing its Israeli franchise to sell homes in Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The campaign points out that such properties are completely illegal under international law and are contrary to U.S. standards and agreements. The campaign highlights that settlements are built on stolen Palestinian land and act as an obstruction to achieving a solution to the conflict. Along with demanding that RE/MAX set standards and policies for its franchises not to sell settlement properties, the Remodel RE/MAX campaign also asks that RE/MAX direct their agents and brokers around the world not to refer clients to brokers and agents who sell such properties.
- Like the Remodel RE/MAX campaign, the Stolen Homes campaign asks that vacation rental internet marketplace Airbnb stop allowing Israeli settlement properties to be listed on their website. Airbnb has listings in settlements throughout the West Bank and East Jerusalem, even including outpost settlements that are illegal even under Israeli law. The Stolen Homes campaign, which formed in January as a coalition of organizations, collected over 150,000 signatures and delivered them to Airbnb asking that the company take a stand against state sanctioned discrimination and remove the listings.

ARIEL GOLD works for CODEPINK as their Palestine campaigner. In 2014 she brought her two children, then 11 and 13, to Israel/Palestine to stay in the homes of Palestinian families in the West Bank and see the situation with their own eyes. In 2015 she led CODEPINK's Palestinian Olive Harvest Delegation. She stayed on afterwards for 5 weeks in Hebron with the nonviolent Palestinian organization, Youth Against Settlements. She wrote about her experiences in Hebron for Tikkun Daily. Ariel lives in Ithaca, NY where she is a member of the URJ congregation, Tikkun v'Or.

On November 19, 2016 at LA Orpheum Theatre, I took to stage with a banner reading "Airbnb out of Settlements" and disrupted a talk by Airbnb funder, Ashton Kutcher, and Airbnb CEO, Brian Chesky. Ashton Kutcher came over to me and asked if he could tell me what Airbnb means to him. I responded that I would first describe to the audience of around 2000 people that Airbnb is directly contributing and profiting from Israel's violations of international law and Palestinians' human rights.

- Like RE/MAX and Airbnb, Hewlett Packard is directly contributing to human rights volations. HP supplies the information technology for the Israeli Navy, making them complicit in the blockade of Gaza and the corresponding escalating humanitarian crisis there. They produce Israel's ID card system that stratifies the society in Israel/Palestine into various different levels of rights and privilege between Jews and non-Jews. They make the biometric fingerprint ID system Israel uses at checkpoints to track Palestinians entering Israel for work. In the U.S. they supply equipment and technology to private and public prisons, making them complicit in mass incarceration and solitary confinement. The campaign to stop HP is based on the historic campaign to boycott Kodak for their role in producing the racist ID cards used in South Africa during apartheid. Just as Kodak was complicit in maintaining South African apartheid, HP is complicit in maintaining Israeli apartheid and occupation.

Strategic BDS campaigns educate people about the conditions of inequality and human rights abuses that are part and parcel of Israel's Occupation. Simultaneously, these campaigns work to end human rights abuses and apply the necessary pressure for Israel to take action to finally end its Occupation of Palestinian lands obtained in 1967 and systems of inequality where different groups of people are subject to different laws. Just as the Montgomery bus boycott played a major role in the U.S. Civil Rights Movement and the Kodak boycott played a major role in the movement to end apartheid in South Africa, so too can strategic BDS campaigns bring a long overdue end to 50 years of Occupation. ■

Tess Scheflan | Activestills

A protest outside RE/MAX offices in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts.

The Threat of BDS

BY MICHA KURZ

As an Israeli born and raised in Jerusalem, when I visit with Jewish communities of the Diaspora—from San Francisco to Melbourne to Rio de Janeiro—I hear a global discussion regarding current realities in Israel and the "question of Palestine" that sounds entirely outdated. It is evident there is a disconnect between the ideological notions of the Diasporic Zionist narrative and present-day circumstances and factors of the realpolitik in Jerusalem.

I assume you, the reader, are familiar with the classic historic narrative: The biblical roots tying the Jewish people to the land of Eretz Yisrael, the need for a Jewish safe haven in the aftermath of the Holocaust and World War II, and finally, the return home after 2,000 years of exile and persecution. We are all familiar with the story of hope and promise for the Jewish people facing constant hardship since it sprouted just seventy years ago: The miraculous triumph against seven enemy Arab armies and gaining independence in 1948, followed by the victorious Six-Day War in 1967, tripling the country's size in six days. Foreigners often reminisce about volunteering on a 1970s kibbutz, hitching rides across the romantic Middle Eastern landscape to eat delicious hummus in Nablus and drink good coffee in Jerusalem.

I remember the Peace Camp's hopes for a two-state solution—the compromise of land for peace during the Oslo Accords in the early 1990s. Growing up in Jerusalem at the time, there is no way I can ever forget the bombs in the buses and cafes, the friends and family we lost. I remember Israel's generous offer at Camp David, and the disappointment later when it turned out there was "no partner for peace." And I certainly remember the Second Palestinian Uprising and the concrete slabs that were put in place around the city separating, seemingly forever, economies and communities. There seemed to always be a constant threat of violence, whether it was attacks in South Lebanon, chemical warfare from Iraq, rockets from Gaza, or the threat of nuclear warfare from Iran. The news on the radio was always blaring, announcing something awful. And now, according to comments from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that ran in *The Guardian*, the second largest existential threat to Israel is the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement (the first is still a nuclear Iran).

Growing up an Israeli patriot, a youth counselor and leader in the Israeli Scouts, and later a veteran combat soldier, I've recited these narratives most of my life. Around the world they have been shared for decades as historic fact in classrooms, synagogues, Jewish Community Centers, churches, parliaments, and businesses. The stories are woven into an impenetrable truth, one that many around the world sadly still refuse to question.

I began to question this narrative during the second Intifada, in 2001. As a soldier, I was ordered to not only protect a community of Jewish settlers in Hebron, but to enable and support their settlement expansion at the expense of the ancient Palestinian market and residents of the city. After eighteen years of growing up in Jerusalem these were the first settlers and the first Palestinians that I had ever met. The facade began to crack, the narrative didn't add up. Where was the border that I was supposed to guard? These settlers were the people who danced when Rabin was assassinated, why were they calling the shots? But even veteran Israeli combat soldiers raising questions about the militarized control of Palestinian civilians are attacked and labeled as traitors by Israeli politicians and media.

In any case, questioning the Israeli narrative is swiftly labeled terrorism if you're Palestinian, self-hating and treasonous if you're Israeli like me, or anti-Semitic coming from anyone else. Any kind of criticism is shut down. Even Rubi Rivlin, the Israeli President from the hawkish Likud party, has been accused at high levels of being a leftist extremist. Shouldn't that raise some questions: Why the hysteria? How have national politics reached such absolute narratives, and what are we so scared of? Sure, Jerusalem streets may feel unsafe, but we're nowhere near the levels of Second Intifada violence. Why is Netanyahu's government rewriting schoolbooks and Supreme Court protocol? And why is the Israeli Foreign Ministry spending millions on international messaging against a grassroots movement calling for nonviolent economic action? And what is this latest threat, BDS, really about? Well, let's clarify:

MICHA KURZ was born and raised in Jerusalem, was a combat soldier in the Israeli military and is now supporter of a number of Palestinian community-based justice and equality initiatives, connecting international solidarity movements, politicians, and supportive funders. He is an early founder of Breaking the Silence, Political Tour coordinator at the Israeli Committee against House Demolitions, and a co-founder of Grassroots AlQuds, a Palestinian platform for community mobilization to put Jerusalem back on the map as the Palestinian capital. He loves the city of Jerusalem and hopes to see it's true potential of a city of freedom in his lifetime.

On July 9, 2005, 171 Palestinian non-governmental organizations initiated a campaign calling for a boycott, divestment, and international sanctions to pressure Israel to uphold international law and human rights. The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign urges various forms of "non-violent punitive measures" against Israel until it "complies with the precepts of international law" by: "Ending its occupation and colonization of all Arab lands and dismantling the Wall; Recognizing the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality; and respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN Resolution 194."

The campaign is organized and coordinated by the Palestinian BDS National Committee. The committee cites a body of UN resolutions and specifically echoes the anti-apartheid campaigns against white minority rule in South Africa. I doubt most of the people objecting to the BDS movement have actually taken the time to read the strategy or the call itself (if you have not yet, please take the time to read it here: https://bdsmovement.net/call).

So why is this nonviolent group of activists such a threat? Perhaps because it calls into question the cornerstone of the Zionist narrative—the idea that, in addition to the Jewish people's victimhood, Palestine and Palestinians don't exist, or alternatively, that Palestinians are violent terrorists. The story must be kept within the narrative of heroic Israeli struggle for survival, therefore, there must be a violent enemy (a terrorist) or the story unravels.

Within the Israeli narrative, the only thing scarier than violent Palestinians is, in fact, nonviolent Palestinians. The BDS movement cracks the facade of the Israeli narrative. By doing so, the global movement exposes a historic Palestinian experience that has otherwise been denied or delegitimized by Israel for decades. This is a narrative the Zionist world denies and omits from our history books: Over six hundred destroyed or depopulated villages during the Palestinian Nakba (catastrophe) and a number of massacres perpetrated by Israeli militias in 1948.

We also don't learn that the post Independence/Nakba military rule of Palestinian/Arab villages and cities lasted until 1966, or how Israeli education and banking systems were forced upon the occupied cities and villages during the 1970s and 1980s.

Under a unity government, Israeli Finance Minister, Ariel Sharon (yup, father of the settlement movement) signed the Israel-U.S. "Free-Trade" agreement with the Reagan Administration. The Israeli government launched the "New Israeli Shekel" (the NIS is the coin still used today in Israel and Palestine). This put an end to the Socialist era of the Zionist experiment on the Israeli side, enforcing Reaganomics-based economies in the Occupied Territories. This was a move to destroy local village-based economies and centuries-old regional economic relationships, further disempowering the local population.

By this point two decades had passed since the 1967 occupation and a new generation of Palestinian students were graduating from universities in the West Bank. They were not only graduating into a military occupation but also into an economic one. The first Palestinian Intifada was a well-organized, unarmed protest movement, which after decades of catastrophe and occupation finally got Palestine on the global map in the late 1980s. Israeli media did not report about the sit-ins, hunger strikes, and boycotts. Instead, the organized uprising was promptly labeled "terrorism" when (later to be named a Nobel Peace Prize Laureate) then-Defense Minister Rabin ordered the Israeli military to "break their bones"—sending tens of thousands of Palestinian activists to hospitals and Israeli prisons.

The uprising succeeded in raising awareness leading to global pressure on Israel. The first time the two-state solution was introduced was in 1991 in Madrid at the first so-called peace talks. Over the following years, under Prime Minister Rabin's Labor party, Israel doubled the number of settlers from 200,000 to 400,000, all *during the peace talks!*

The economic implication of the U.S. brokered 1994-Paris-Protocol (the same year Clinton signed the North American Free Trade Agreement into law) was a kosher stamp of approval for the Bank of Israel, using the NIS, to control the income/export taxes and VAT in the Occupied Territories. It took a decade to quell the protest movement and to corner Palestinian leadership into accepting the West's conditions for legitimacy. The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), representing Palestinians in Israel, Jerusalem, the West Bank, Gaza, and around the world, was dismantled by 1995. The Palestinian Authority (PA) was promptly assembled to administer municipal responsibilities in a number of Palestinian cities in the West Bank.

It would not be an exaggeration to claim that the PA is an extended branch of the Israeli government. The real implications of the Oslo Accords were the entrapment of the Palestinian workforce and the subjugation of old Palestinian economies to the neo-liberal Israeli (American) banking system. The two-state solution was really based on a one-state Israeli economy.

Later, Prime Minister Ehud Barak's media team finally exposed how the 1999 Camp David "generous offer" didn't include water rights, international borders, territorial continuity, an independent economy or even a capital in the negotiated Palestinian state. But still, all Israelis heard from our politicians and media, repeated time and again, was the mantra: "There is no partner for peace." Most Israelis will never learn in Israeli civics class that Palestinian residents of Jerusalem have a different legal status and do not have the universal right to vote in any national elections. Nor will we learn that it isn't BDS causing massive unemployment;

Israeli soldiers try and break up a protest against the Occupation near a Rami Levi supermarket in the Sha'ar Binyamin settlement. The demonstration was also a call for a boycott of all illegal Israeli settlements.

Yotam Ronen | Activestills

that the eight-meter wall was constructed around the largest Palestinian metropolitan areas, separating workforce in the suburbs from their central business district, causing thousands of businesses to fold and leading to massive unemployment, intentionally and permanently crippling Palestinian economies.

Palestinian political leadership made a strategic political decision to call off violent resistance in 2004. Since then, the ongoing status quo has allowed Israeli business to grow and for us Israelis to continue our lives oblivious to the ongoing oppression of Palestinians. While it may seem as if the only thing Israel responds to is violence, the nonviolent global BDS call has been one of the strongest campaigns to keep the Occupation on the global map without the use of violence!

With the recent appointment of rabid Israeli settlement supporter, David Friedman by President Trump, as the next U.S. Ambassador to Israel, the U.S. has finally come out of the closet clearly on the Israeli side of the Palestinian/Israeli negotiations. Freedman honestly and openly voices the implicit message those of us who have been following closely have known for quite some time: there isn't going to be a two-state solution! Perhaps now, a movement for justice and equality can focus on more practical campaigns.

With a clear set of demands designed to guarantee equality in Israel/Palestine, the global BDS movement is anchored in progressive standards of justice—and the world is listening. The Israeli settlement economy is considered a pariah and has been singled out by European institutions that now demand that settlement goods touting that they are "made in Israel" be labeled as such. Major Christian churches such as the Presbyterians have voted to divest from corporations turning a profit off the Occupation. Companies such as the French cell phone carrier Orange pulled out. The largest private security company in the world, G4S, recently announced its intention to abandon its contracts in Israel. Even Israeli companies Soda Stream and Ahava (owned today by China) have recently declared they will relocate across the Green Line.

Critics of BDS sometimes ask why there is a disproportionate focus on Israel as opposed to other countries with records of human rights violations. The first part of the answer is we're not, there are many other campaigns for justice we are focusing on and you must not be paying attention. The second part is that we focus on Israel/Palestine because together we receive more financial aid than almost anyone! And finally, the answer is that Israel claims to be a progressive, democratic society, so shouldn't we expect and demand that it lives up to the standard it has set for itself?

The BDS call in no way makes Israelis or Jews in the Diaspora less safe. But the grassroots movement for justice demands we face the racist nature of our Israeli democracy. BDS invites us to discuss the unequal nature of the one-state

Israeli soldiers keep watch at a weekly demonstration against the Israeli Separation Wall in Bil'in in the West Bank in 2005.

Keren Manor | Activestills

economic reality. For many of us in Jewish communities around the world this is a devastating truth to come to terms with. Israel isn't really the Jewish democracy we thought it was, let's be honest, friends, Israel is a democracy for Jews, not for anyone else—Palestinians just happen to be there.

Anyone following Israeli politics is aware that Israeli society is not taking the news well, and has gone down a very scary and dark road. Jewish supremacist lynch mobs dominate the streets of downtown Jerusalem without fear of prosecution. More than ever, government/military policy is designed to violently pressure Palestinian communities to leave. Some young Palestinians, in turn, crack under the pressure and violently react, lashing out with random acts of violence, stabbing Israeli civilians. I cannot remember a time when tensions were so high as they are at the time of penning this article.

But the heightened levels of rhetoric, violence, and racism in Jerusalem are not caused by those Palestinians or the BDS movement. This grim political reality is led by Israeli politicians, but mostly enabled by the silence and compliance of Jews and Christians around the world. Blindly supporting the Israeli narrative has caused a national psychosis no current Israeli leader can lead us out of. As an Ashkenazi Israeli man, I am learning just how much privilege I've had all my life and I hope to leverage it toward equality and justice. This is why I place my hope in the principled Palestinian call for BDS and in grassroots organizers in Palestine.

As an Israeli, I now work in solidarity with my Palestinian neighbors because I was raised in Jerusalem, a city we share, and because I was taught "never again" and to not stand idle in complacency while we ethnically cleanse our neighbors. I work with a growing network of Jews around the world, in the Diaspora, who, awake to the injustices of my country, are joining the BDS call and organizing their communities. Using the core of Jewish ethics, these groups are asking mainstream Jewish institutions to stand behind Jewish values and speak out against the ongoing violence and the Occupation.

But most of all, I support BDS because it is only the beginning. BDS provides the principled, justice-based foundation for the truly democratic society I would like to live in, it implicitly asks; what does the day after the occupation look like? BDS provides a list of tactics. The broader strategy is to support a vibrant Palestinian society, side by side with the Israeli, so that neither has to leave. BDS calls for making separation, inequality, racism, and blind nationalism things of the past.

Otherwise, you tell me, what's the alternative? ■

Binationalism

BY AYELET WALDMAN

THOUGH I AM A WRITER BY TRADE, I am an attorney by training, one with a near fanatic devotion to the ideals of the United States Constitution, as revised and expanded beyond its slavery-tarnished origins. What I love most about America is its as-yet-unfulfilled promise of egalitarianism and equality, of one person/one vote, of the ability of a multicultural nation to live in fractious harmony. And yet, until recently, I had never allowed myself to question the wisdom of the classically framed two-state solution—Israelis here, Palestinians there, separation begetting peace.

Then, in April of 2016, on a trip to Israel-Palestine as part of a group of writers working on the forthcoming anthology *Kingdom of Olives and Ash: Writers Confront the Occupation*, I met the Hebrew University professor Bashir Bashir. Dr. Bashir views the question of whether the governing system of Israel-Palestine is one of a single state or of two states as all but irrelevant. The important question, rather, is whether the governing system in Palestine-Israel will continue to be one of segregation and zero-sum-games, or whether we can build a future based on the acknowledgement that this land is shared. Dr. Bashir argues that we must strive for "an inclusive, humanistic form of politics that allows us [Palestinians] to accommodate Israeli Jews in a democratic venture of togetherness." This he calls "binationalism."

For some, the idealized version of this binationalism might be a single state, where laws mandate the separation of church and state, protect against discrimination and uphold the rights of both *collectives*, as well as those of all of the individuals who live there. For other people, the ideal could be reconciled with a two-state formula: one Israeli and Hebrew-speaking, the other Palestinian and Arabic-speaking, but each with sizable and protected minorities, and with meaningful and consistent cooperation between the two states. Yet another version of binationalism might be a confederation, with overlapping systems of government. Common to all of these solutions and the many others expressed in these pages and elsewhere is the ideal of togetherness, of democracy.

A woman pounds the Qalandiya checkpoint gate with a rock during the International Women's Day march in Qalandiya, West Bank in 2014.

Keren Manor of Activestills.

But of course, last spring when I sat in a conference room of the Ambassador Hotel in East Jerusalem, being encouraged by Dr. Bashir and his colleague Dr. Hillel Cohen, also a Hebrew University professor, to envision ever more imaginative possibilities of mutuality, Donald Trump had not yet been elected president of the United States. There were not avowed white supremacists in positions of power in the White House. Togetherness seemed possible, the best—*the only*—way forward.

In this new, previously unimaginable world, is it too fantastical to dream and aspire toward a politics of togetherness in Palestine-Israel?

Or is that dream all that we have left? ■

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AYELET WALDMAN is the author of *A Really Good Day* and the co-editor, along with Michael Chabon, of *Kingdom of Olives and Ash: Writers Confront the Occupation*.

Where Do We Begin?

BY STEFANIE FOX

As someone who works to organize Jews into the movement for Palestinian rights, this is the question I hear most often from those just encountering the injustice Palestinians face and have faced because of Israeli policies. I think most people mean something along the lines of "What concrete action can I take to help?" But I think it's also a deeper and truly vital question.

Where do we begin?

As we try to answer the question of what we can do now to end the unjust status quo, it matters where in history we start to tell the story. Just as this is not an intractable religious conflict dating back centuries, neither did it begin 50 years ago. So let's try looking for a beginning.

What if we looked at the Occupation, by which we usually mean the military rule established over the territories Israel seized during the 1967 war, not as the starting place, but as a particular violence that grows out of a deeper racist logic behind the founding of the State of Israel itself in 1948? What if we face the idea that the Occupation is a direct outcome of the Zionist vision of the state, not an unfortunate mistake that can be remedied to save it? We start, then, not with the map, but with the cartographer.

There are few topics so fraught among Jews than looking not just at Israel, or even the Occupation, but at the ideology and violence behind the founding of the state: at the 750,000 Palestinians displaced and dispossessed, at the 400 villages depopulated and destroyed, at the brutality toward Mizrahi and Sephardi Jews and cultures, at the upheaval and trauma and devastation that Palestinians call the *Nakba*, or catastrophe.

If we are really seeking justice, as Jews, as humans, we must begin to face that catastrophe as our own. Slavery is not only African American history, it is American history. The catastrophe of the *Nakba*—from 1948 to today—is not only Palestinian history, it is for and on all of us. To really face the trauma concomitant with the founding of the state, and the violence that has unfolded in furtherance of Zionist goals ever since, we have to understand it as *the* story, one that is still occurring. The Nakba is history and it's present for each of us. It's all of ours.

Of course we work to end the Occupation, as swiftly as we are able, but we can't uproot the policies of Occupation if we don't understand them as a manifestation of a broader dehumanizing logic that predicates Jewish (most particularly white Ashkenazi Jewish) safety on the domination over, and disappearing of, another people. From the beginning, the Zionist movement ignored or sought to displace the indigenous population of Palestine, and the state it established is predicated on that erasure. We can't simply redraw the map if we don't understand what and whom it is drawn over.

"If we start from the beginning, we unfold a whole new kind of map. One that charts the course toward real justice, lasting peace."

If we start from the beginning, we unfold a whole new kind of map. One that charts the course toward real justice, lasting peace. When we confront the Nakba as part of our own history, we reconnect to our shared humanity. We move past our communal mythologies and falsely divided histories, and can begin to truly see where justice and healing must enter. By taking on the truth of Zionism, we reconnect to possibility in our organizing. We allow ourselves the chance to participate in fighting for true liberation, for all people. ■

STEFANIE FOX is a deputy director at Jewish Voice for Peace, where she has led the organizing program since 2010. She has a background in public health and experience doing movement-building work with diverse communities across multiple racial and social justice issues.

Why My Jewishness Compels Me to Stand for Justice in Palestine

BY ETHAN BUCKNER

THIS PAST JULY I RISKED ARREST alongside dozens of Jews and Palestinians in Hebron as we attempted to build the city's only movie theater in the remnants of a Palestinian-owned metal factory. Hauling rubble and singing songs of freedom in English, Hebrew, and Arabic, I felt more grounded in my Jewishness than I ever have in my life.

The action, which we called #CinemaHebron, was the most profound demonstration yet of my reinvigorated rootedness in Jewish heritage and values. A renewed energy and dedication that came after a long and painful journey navigating the intersection of Judaism, personal and historical trauma, and my relationship with Israel.

That journey culminated with a choice: succumb to a Judaism of xenophobia and fear or embrace a Jewish tradition rooted in social justice and loving-kindness.

Young Jewish Americans are increasingly aware of a schism on Israel/Palestine in the American Jewish community and, like me, recognize that it is our Jewishness that compels us to pursue justice for Palestinians. Older generations and the current Jewish establishment must understand this or risk losing legitimacy with my generation. Though my Jewish story only speaks for my experience, I do believe that my story can help illuminate why more and more young Jews are standing up for freedom and dignity in Israel and Palestine.

My childhood was deeply rooted in Jewish community life. Growing up, I cherished Friday night Shabbat dinners and went to synagogue every Saturday morning. My parents—a gentle and compassionate cantor at our shul and a fierce and loving psychotherapist and professor—taught my siblings and me the value of *tikkun olam*, to strive to shape the world for the better. As I entered high school, I felt connected to Judaism but wanted more, so I decided to join a two-week journey to Poland and Israel called March of the Living, a program funded by the Jewish Federation. With thousands of other diaspora youth, I walked from Auschwitz to Birkenau on Yom HaShoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day. I became a witness to genocide. My bones chilled thinking of my great-great grandparents; had they stayed in Poland, my family would likely not be alive. Walking through the death camps, I saw the ghosts of Jewish ancestors suffering unimaginable horrors.

One night, strolling through downtown Warsaw after visiting Majdanek, a completely intact death camp abandoned at the end of World War II, I watched in horror as a Polish teenage girl was hit by a car while crossing the street. Her body landed at my feet, limp. From a sheltered childhood in the Minneapolis suburbs, I was suddenly wrestling with both the insurmountable terror of genocide and the intimate anguish of a single death. Even though I didn't know the girl who lost her life at my feet, I longed to know her story, and I ached to think of her family, her community, her hopes and dreams for life lost. We left Poland. I was traumatized. That moment—the intertwining of one death at my feet and millions weighing on my shoulders—completely shifted the trajectory of my life.

We landed in Israel at sunrise days before Yom HaZikaron, Israeli Memorial Day, which is followed by Yom HaAtzmaut, Israeli Independence Day. The message was broadcast to us bright as a billboard: out of genocide, Israel was born as the Jewish homeland. The trip was rich with ceremony and packed with stops at Israel's most majestic sights. The Jewish Federation met its goal for participants to, according to the March of the Living website, "understand the importance of Israel . . . through the lesson that Jews will never again allow

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In Abu Dis in the West Bank, this is what Israeli apologists for the Separation Wall often call a "fence."

themselves to be defenseless." Out of oppression came sweet liberation. Israel swiftly became the nucleus of my Jewish identity, an experience I shared with so many of my peers.

Upon returning from March of the Living, with only death on my mind, I entered a period of confusion and depression. I had flashbacks of the concentration camps and the teenage girl's death. But I was revitalized at my newfound connection to Israel, and channeled that energy into my Jewish community. I joined the B'nai B'rith Youth Organization and worked to build Jewish community among my peers. Witnessing the legacy of the Holocaust sparked my bond with Israel. But something else ignited within me as well. My Jewish education taught me to practice boundless compassion and *tikkun olam*. So out of grief and trauma, I committed my life to serving *life*; to contribute to a world where no people suffer at the hands of another. After high school, I lived in Jerusalem on a gap-year program studying coexistence in Israel and the Jewish Diaspora. During that year, my high school picture-perfect view of Israel ruptured as I learned more about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In college, I learned more history that was completely absent in my Jewish education. I learned about the Nakba, when over 750,000 Palestinians were forced to leave their homes to pave the way for the Israeli state in 1948. I learned about the preemptive attack in 1967 that spurred a 50-year Occupation. I learned about the Sabra and Shatila massacres in 1982, and Israel's ruthless assault on Lebanon in 2006. I learned about checkpoints, segregated roads, military raids, and home demolitions. I learned about deplorable conditions and human rights abuses that define the norm in the Occupied Territories.

As I learned more and more history, I became confused and angry. How could I reconcile my Jewish upbringing that on one hand taught me to pursue *tzedek* (justice) and *chesed* (loving-kindness), while on the other pressed me to support a state founded upon forced displacement and sustained upon racism, violence, and occupation? So I turned away, and like many of my peers at that age, decided to ignore Israel and Palestine. Any mention of the conflict brought me great anxiety and I sought to change the subject. Grappling with Israel meant threatening to topple my increasingly fragile Jewish identity.

I focused on other issues, from climate change and environmental justice to economic inequality and racial justice. I sought to fulfill my commitment to serving life through social action but refused to confront the ethical dissonance I saw in my own community.

Then Operation Protective Edge shook me out of passivity.

Keren Manor | Activestills

During the summer of 2014, Israeli forces launched an offensive in Gaza that resulted in over 2,100 casualties, most of whom were civilians. What I saw was not only unfathomable violence, but American Jewish institutions ruthlessly defending the war—supposedly on behalf of the entire Jewish community. Like waking from a disturbing dream, I could no longer remain silent. I answered the call of the IfNotNow movement, to demand that our Jewish community pick a side: endless occupation or freedom and dignity for all?

Diving deeper into anti-occupation activism, I realized I needed to see what had been hidden from me with my own eyes and root my work in partnership with Palestinians working nonviolently to challenge the Occupation. That's why I joined the Center for Jewish Nonviolence in the West Bank this past July (also in this issue: an article by Ilana Sumka about this year's upcoming trip), and how I found myself helping build a cinema in Hebron. On the trip, I witnessed the horrors of the Occupation. I saw demolished homes, checkpoints, and segregated roads. I met Palestinians whose water had been poisoned, crops destroyed, homes demolished, and relatives attacked by nearby settlers. I saw two settlers attack a journalist. I saw Palestinian villages without access to water and electricity while just next door the IDF built roads, power lines, and water pipes to Jewish outposts that are illegal even under Israeli law. I met Palestinians subjected to daily verbal and physical humiliations from soldiers and settlers. And I met former IDF soldiers who shared stories of being horrified but helpless to avoid committing daily harassments of Palestinians from strip searches to home seizures.

In the West Bank, I also witnessed the tremendous resilience and spiritual strength alive among Palestinian nonviolent activists. I met leaders like Issa Amro with Youth Against Settlements who is resisting the Occupation by working to keep Palestinians in their homes, to assert their right to simply exist. That was the spirit of our #CinemaHebron action: to affirm that Palestinian residents in Hebron have the right to dignity, community, love, and joy. I met community leaders in rural villages and in East Jerusalem that are embracing nonviolent strategies to protect their homes from demolition. I met Daoud Nassar from Tent of Nations, who has been bringing environmental education and peace building programs to the Bethlehem community for decades. These courageous leaders are deeply committed to nonviolent resistance and persist despite tremendous danger in their work. Our time in the West Bank was so deeply Jewish. We worked with our hands and our minds and our hearts, grappling with Jewish texts just as we struggled with sledgehammers and shovels doing agricultural work on Palestinian land adjacent to settlements. We celebrated Shabbat in Susiya, an unrecognized Palestinian village, sharing our tradition with our Palestinian partners as we sang into the sunset. And we shared in the rich diversity of what it means to be Jewish; on our delegation, observance level ranged from orthodox to reconstructionist. Some worked for Jewish institutions and others were unaffiliated. But all of us shared the deep longing for our values to be reflected in the living reality on the ground in Israel and Palestine.

My work with IfNotNow and the Center for Jewish Nonviolence is deeply rooted in Jewish values, community, and tradition. At the same time, right-wingers have been slinging hate speech at our work, supposedly in the name of Judaism. Since coming back home, I've been asking myself: do I belong to the same tradition as those who decry our work for justice?

As American Jews (at least in the Ashkenazi experience), our collective history of oppression and genocide are headwaters that have led us down two drastically different rivers. One leads to a dammed-and-walled insular existence defined by ever-present fear of annihilation. This is the Judaism that embraces racism and violence in Israel and blind obedience in the United States. This is the Judaism currently upheld by mainstream Jewish institutions that claim to speak on behalf of our communities, but they do not represent me, my generation, and thousands of others that believe in freedom and dignity for all Israelis and Palestinians.

Our work to end the Occupation is also work to liberate ourselves as Jews from generational trauma, from institutionalized fear, and from the ways in which dehumanizing others also dehumanizes us. As a Jew, I can no longer ignore the Occupation, because if I am not for myself, who will be for me?

The other river opens into a rich tradition of social justice activism. This is the Judaism rooted in boundless and borderless compassion. The Judaism that compelled Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel to march beside Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in Selma in 1965. The Judaism that inspired countless young Jews to join the Freedom Rides and protest the Vietnam War. This is the Judaism that demands equity and justice for Palestinians because of—not despite of—the Holocaust. Our history of oppression demands we stand for justice, dignity, and equity for all. Because if we are only for ourselves, what are we?

I choose a Judaism that affirms my commitment to life that I made after returning from Poland a decade ago. I choose to embrace and defend a Judaism that stands for justice in word and in deed. And it has been liberating to find and build a community of my peers that are harnessing and living our tradition in a way that deeply aligns with the Jewish values I was raised with.

Ignoring Israel and remaining silent out of fear of estrangement only serves to reinforce the status quo. I refuse to remain silent. I refuse to remain complicit with the Occupation and decimation of the Palestinian people. Our movement is growing, and we're not backing down until we win. Because if not now, when? ■

Forget Solutions, We Are the Problem

BY BEN EHRENREICH

On the fifteenth day of Israel's 2014 war on Gaza, the United States Department of Defense agreed to resupply the Israeli military with 120 mm mortar rounds and 40 mm grenades. Israel's own stock had presumably been depleted in the offensive, which at that point had taken almost 700 Palestinian lives. The transfer required the approval of the American president and likely occurred swiftly: the U.S. stores a billion dollars worth of munitions inside Israel for such "emergencies." By the war's end, one month and three days later, 2,251 Palestinians had died, nearly two-thirds of them civilians, nearly a quarter of them children. As awful as they are, these numbers bear repeating.

> It is not up to us in the U.S. to "solve" this "problem." We are the problem.

Much has been made of the tension between Barack Obama and Benjamin Netanyahu. However much the two men may have found each other's company unpleasant, Obama proved a faithful friend to the most right-wing government in Israel's history. He vetoed more resolutions critical of Israel in the UN Security Council than any previous American president. If the $3.8 billion of military aid a year he pledged to Israel fell short of Netanyahu's wishes, it is still far more than the U.S. has ever given any other country in the world. This is what bad relations with Israel look like. Trump has promised to forge an even closer bond. His appointment of David Friedman as ambassador suggests that the U.S. may soon cease to even pretend to play at being an impartial mediator between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. It was never a very convincing act: No matter how many American administrations have cast themselves as "honest brokers" in successive waves of negotiations for something that we still insist on calling peace, our true role has long been obvious to those living behind Israel's walls. We are the occupier's most enthusiastic accomplice, its sponsor and prime enabler. When Israel runs low on munitions and cannot kill Palestinians quickly enough, we are the ones who give them more.

The United States is not a bystander but a participant in these hostilities. We fund the Occupation. We defend it. We cover for its crimes. Palestine's dead are not just Israel's to atone for, but ours as well. Our responsibilities here are therefore very simple. We must organize and pressure our government to stop abetting Israel's steady seizure and theft of Palestinian land and its ongoing slaughter—sometimes slow, sometimes fast—of Palestinians. This means demanding an end to military aid while pushing for boycott, divestment, and sanctions. This is no small task, but it is not impossible. A movement is quickly growing on university campuses around the country. The efforts of Israel's most reactionary supporters to tar activists as anti-Semitic and to outlaw boycotts of the sort that helped end apartheid in South Africa are signs that they take this movement very seriously. So should we.

In the meantime, it is not up to us in the U.S. to "solve" this "problem." We are the problem. Until that changes we have no business offering solutions of any sort. The task ahead of us will require all the energy and creativity we can find. ■

Ben Ehrenreich's most recent book, *The Way to the Spring*, is based on his reporting from the West Bank, where he lived from 2013 to 2014. He is also the author of two novels, *Esther* and *The Suitors*.

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From: Untitled Poems, by Ko Un

Translated by Brother Anthony of Taizé and Lee Sang-Wha

438,

They tell us not to be heavy, not to be deep.
They tell us not to be passionate.
The truth is always defeated
by lies.
They tell us not to be deep.
They tell us not to memorize.
Everything is calculated.
They tell us not to look at the scenery,
for they take photos of all the scenery.

They tell us not to become ourselves,
for we are not we
but someone in the street.

They tell us not to read books, not to think.
Day
and night
there are very funny gags.

Do you mean to search for the road,
mean to search for the road?
Just go as the navigation directs.
They tell us not to search for the road.

A flock of nineteen or twenty turtledoves,
when one flies up,
all fly up,
fly up somehow, clumsily.

They tell us not to fly like those.
They tell us to fly lightly
like an unmanned stealth plane.

What shall I do?

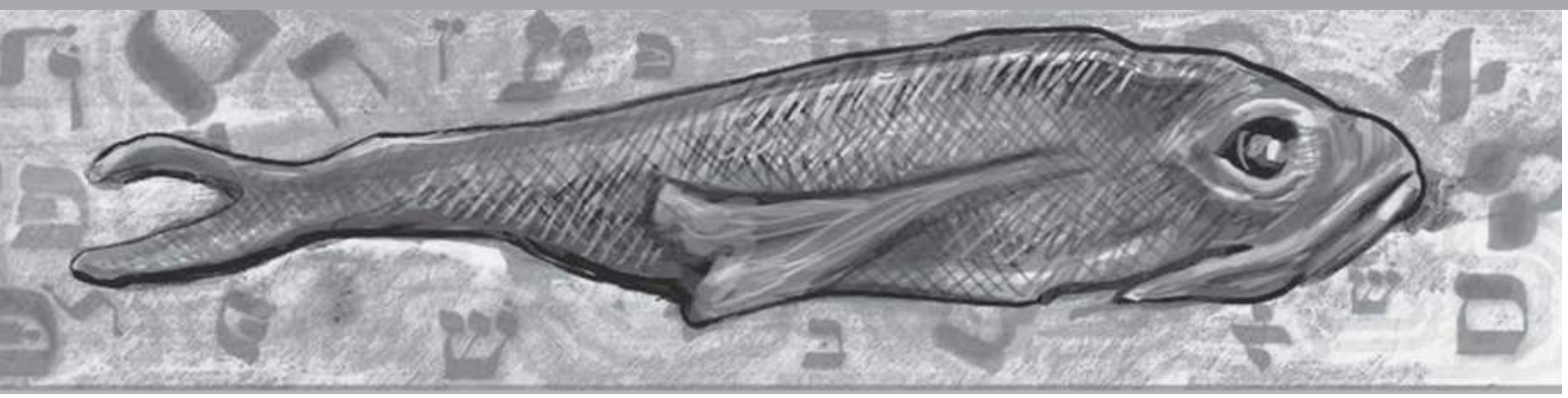
They tell us not to write pressing down hard.
They tell us to write
lightly
lightly
as if we are typing or scarcely typing on a keyboard.

They tell us not to stay standing in the street.
They tell us to go to a sky lounge,
and sit there.

They tell us to sit
and then to lie down,
lie down breathing, then stop breathing.

They tell us to live here, in your utopia, then die.
What shall I do?
What shall I do?

Tania Advani



A FISH STORY

Found in The NY Times, 2007

by Jane Shore

They're still debating whether or not
it was God revealing Himself that day
to the two fish cutters in the Catskills.
Mr. Luis Nivelo, a born-again Christian,
was lifting a live 20-pound carp
out of the box of iced-down fish
and was about to club it on the head
when it began to speak Hebrew.

The shock of a fish speaking Hebrew—
or any language, ancient or modern—
threw Luis against the wall and down
to the slimy wooden packing crates
that covered the cutting room floor.
He looked around to see if the voice
had come from the slop sink,
or the shop's cat. But it had not.

So he ran to the front of the store,
screaming, "It's the devil! The devil
is here and he's speaking in tongues!"
blubbering and genuflecting
in front of his boss, Mr. Zalman Rosen,
a Hassid with eleven children.
"You *meshugeneh*!" yelled Mr. Rosen.
"This fish I must see for myself."

But as he approached the giant carp
flopping on the stainless-steel cutting table,
he heard it muttering and shouting
apocalyptic warnings like the prophet
Elijah—an Elijah with fins and gills.
"The end is near!" the fish yelled.
It next commanded Mr. Rosen
to pray every day and study the Torah.

The fish identified itself as the soul
of a former customer, a pious
Hasidic man who'd died, childless,
the year before. He'd often bought carp
at the shop to chop up and grind into
gefilte fish for Sabbath meals for the poor.
He said that to be reincarnated as a fish
was an honor. At that, Mr. Rosen panicked,

hacking at the fish with a machete,
but it wiggled and bucked so wildly
Mr. Rosen sliced his own thumb instead
and was taken by ambulance to the ER,
leaving Luis alone to mind the store.
Mr. Rosen gone, the fish flopped off
the counter and back into the carp box;
quickly butchered by Luis, and sold.

Was the talking fish a rare glimmer
of God's spirit, or a warning about
the coming war in Iraq? Was it a hoax—
a Purim prank? Some doubters said
the story was about as credible
as the Burning Bush or sighting a U.F.O.,
and can't be verified, since the proof
has long been eaten up. Or it's a miracle.

Two men do not dream the same dream.
But when they do, you cannot ignore it.
Both men still stand by their story,
which they are only too happy to repeat,
beside bins of sturgeon, tuna, mackerel,
and kippered salmon in gold-foil skins
lined up on ice-beds like Dead Sea Scrolls
beneath the sign—*"Our fish speaks for itself."*

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