

Judaism and Zionism: A Divorce in the Making...? – Alan Hart

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Way back in October 2001, a prominent and widely respected liberal London rabbi, Dr. David Goldberg, made what I thought at the time was the most remarkable statement ever made by a Jew in the 53 years that had passed since the creation, mainly by terrorism and ethnic cleansing, of the Zionist (not Jewish) state of Israel. He said that Israel's "colonization" of Palestine had left many Jews "questioning their unconditional support for Israel." Then this: **"It may be time for Judaism and Zionism to go their separate ways."**

The report I read of Goldberg's remarks was by Andrew Johnson in *The Independent On Sunday*. Its headline for his story was BRITISH JEWS AT ODDS AFTER RABBI CRITICISES ISRAEL'S "COLONIZATION". As the report indicated, what Goldberg said had provoked a "passionate argument" in the pages of the *Jewish Chronicle*, editorially a standard bearer for Israel right or wrong.

I once had the pleasure of talking with Rabbi Goldberg over lunch, just the two of us. From my research I knew that he was what I like to call a GHB (Good Human Being) and a man worthy of respect. He was, for example, the first prominent Jew in the UK to call for recognition of legitimate Palestine rights – he did so in an article for *The Times* in 1978; and he was the first rabbi to initiate dialogue meetings between Judaism, Christianity and Islam when the Regent's Park mosque opened in the same year. But what I liked about him most of all was the quite rare thing he had in common with my dear friend Ilan Pappé. He was without a trace of the self-righteousness that is the hallmark of Jews everywhere who have been brainwashed by Zionist propaganda.

He is also a thought provoking author. His books include *The Jewish People, Their History and Their Religion*, *The Divided Self: Israel and the Jewish Psyche*, and, in 2012, *This (Zionism in action) Is Not the Way*.

In his review and endorsement of the latter, Avi Shlaim, a leading Jewish "revisionist" meaning honest historian, wrote this. **"In the aftermath of its victory in the June 1967 War, Israel lost its moral compass.** Many diaspora Jews suffer from selective moral vision about Israel. Rabbi David Goldberg is an admirable exception. He places Israel's treatment of the Palestinians under an uncompromising lens. After the critique comes an eloquent plea for ethical Zionism – Zionism grounded in Jewish values."

Ethical Zionism? With due respect to Rabbi Goldberg (and Avi Shlaim), the Gentile me believes there could never be such a thing. From the beginning Zionism's engine drivers knew their assertion that Palestine was "a land without people for a people with land" was propaganda nonsense, a Grand Deception. So I think it can be said without fear of contradiction that Zionism, founded in the knowledge that it would have to resort to ethnic cleansing to achieve its goal, **never had a moral compass.**

I think it can also be speculated that the discovery of a moral compass by a significant majority of Israeli Jews would mean **the de-Zionization of Palestine that became Israel and thus the end of Zionism**. Why? Proof that a moral compass had been discovered would include as Item Number One **an acknowledgement of the wrong done to the Palestinians by Zionism and acceptance of the need to right the wrong**. Zionism is never, ever, going to put itself out of business.

But even if Rabbi Goldberg did allow himself to entertain some wishful thinking about the possibility of Zionism becoming grounded in Jewish values (I presume he meant progressive, reformist, modern Jewish values), that would not detract from the significance of his very courageous and most profound statement – that it may be time for Judaism and Zionism to go their separate ways.

2001 was clearly not the time and 13 years on a provocative question seems to the Gentile me to be in order.

Why should Judaism unshackle itself from Zionism?

One part of the short answer is that the credibility of Judaism is being undermined by Zionism's contempt for its moral values and ethical principles, In that sense there's a case for saying that Zionism is a threat to survival of Judaism. (The detailed case was made by Auschwitz survivor Hajo G. Meyer, an anti-Zionist Dutch national of German-Jewish origin, in his 2007 book *An Ethical Tradition Betrayed, The End of Judaism*).

Also to be noted in the context of the paragraph above is that Zionism's founders were secular. Their only interest in Judaism was using its idea of God as an estate agent.

The other part of the short answer is signalled by the title of my book – *Zionism: The Real Enemy of the Jews*.

Today the message of that title is being underlined by a rising, global tide of **anti-Israelism**. Contrary to what Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and those of the neo-fascist tendency to the extreme right of him assert, **this rising tide is NOT, generally speaking, a manifestation of anti-Semitism** (meaning prejudice against and a loathing of all Jews everywhere just because they are Jews). It is a manifestation of concern and anger provoked by the Zionist (not Jewish) state's arrogance of power and insufferable self-righteousness. And it is happening because more and more people of all faiths and none, including a still smallish but growing number of Jews, are beginning to see Israel for what it really is – **the oppressor and not the victim**.

The danger for the Jews of the world is that **anti-Israelism could be transformed into anti-Semitism, setting the stage for Holocaust II**, my shorthand for another great turning against Jews everywhere, and starting quite possibly in America. A warning of this danger was issued by Yehoshafat Harkabi, Israel's longest serving Director of Military Intelligence, in his 1988 book *Israel's Fateful Hour*. He wrote:

Israel is the criterion according to which all Jews will tend to be judged. Israel as a Jewish state is an example of the Jewish character, which finds free and concentrated expression within it. Anti-Semitism has deep and historical roots. Nevertheless, any flaw in Israeli conduct, which initially is cited as anti-Israelism, is likely to be transformed into empirical proof of the validity of anti-Semitism.

It would be a tragic irony if the Jewish state, which was intended to solve the problem of anti-Semitism, was to become a factor in the rise of anti-Semitism. Israelis must be aware that the price of their misconduct is paid not only by them but also Jews throughout the world.

Harkabi also had a message for Jews throughout the world.

They must dare to speak their minds candidly, without being afraid to disagree with Israel. The reticence of the American Jewish leadership is not to their credit. Instead of publicly expressing their concern they act as apologists for policies and conduct of which many of them privately disapprove, abdicating their responsibilities as leaders in America and as influential advisers in Israel. **Muteness is not neutrality but an endorsement of current Likud policies.**

If Harkabi was alive today I would suggest to him that in an updated text "Likud policies" should be replaced by "the policies of the neo-fascist right and the racist religious zealots".

Peter Beinart recently noted that "The reality of the growth of racism and religious extremism in Israel has been largely ignored by those groups in the U.S. such as AIPAC and the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) which devote so much time, energy and resources to promoting what they perceive, often mistakenly, to be Israel's interests."

As Harkabi explained in a chapter titled *Nationalistic Judaism*, religion in Israel was marginal and did not attempt to influence or guide Zionist policy until after the 1967 war. Because of their mistaken belief (the product of one of Zionism's biggest propaganda lies) that Israel's existence was in danger on the eve of that war, very many religious Jews were inspired to interpret victory as "a manifestation of God's intervention"; and to conclude that "the conquest of parts of the historic land of Israel cast a brilliant light on the Zionist enterprise."

What Harkabi described as this awakening of a nationalistic Judaism was a slow and evolving process which has led to what he called "national religious extremism" demanding and getting a leading role in Zionist policy making.

Harkabi concluded his chapter on nationalistic Judaism with a statement about the need "to avert a crisis in Judaism" and "alleviate the blow to the Jewish religion when the political position of annexation of Judea and Samaria supported by religion comes to grief."

The latest expression of despair about the reticence of American Jews to speak their minds was that of Allan C Brownfield in an article for *Issues*, the journal of the American Council for Judaism, of which he is editor. Under the headline ON THE GROWTH OF RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM IN ISRAEL: A CHALLENGE TO ITS AMERICAN FRIENDS, he wrote:

“In a thoughtful new study guide issued by the Israel/Palestine Mission of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), a question is asked which few have thus far been willing to pose: **‘Given the liberal values shared by many American Jews and the long, proud tradition of Jewish participation in the struggle for human rights worldwide, why has there been so little outrage expressed at Israel’s human rights abuses of Palestinians in the decades since Israel’s founding?’**”

Brownfield then quoted the answer to that question given by Paul Krugman, the Princeton economist and *New York Times* columnist. “The truth is that like many liberal American Jews – and most American Jews are still liberal – **I basically avoid thinking about where Israel is going.**” Krugman’s explanation of why was “the high price for speaking out” which is “to bring yourself under intense attack from organized groups that try to make any criticism of Israel’s policies tantamount to anti-Semitism.”

Fear of being condemned and reviled by Zionism’s verbal hit-men and possibly ostracized is undoubtedly one reason for the silence of the majority of American and European Jews.

Another is that arguments about Israel and its policies can and do tear Jewish families apart, separating parents from children, husbands from wives and brothers from sisters.

Another is ignorance of what Zionism has done and is still doing in Palestine that became Israel. For very many American and European Jews, Zionism means nothing more than Jews from anywhere exercising their right to return to their God given, ancestral homeland. (For this article I’ll leave aside the fact that Israel/Palestine is not the ancestral homeland of most Jews of the world today). In other words, most American and European Jews have no idea that Zionism is an ethnic cleansing process in action.

Then there is what I believe to be the main reason for the silence of most Jews. Deep down, perhaps only in their sub-consciousness, they believe, because of their history and Zionist conditioning, that Holocaust II is a real possibility. In that light they see Israel as their refuge of last resort, their insurance policy. So, they tell themselves, do nothing and say nothing that could assist Israel’s enemies and put that insurance policy at risk.

The irony, perhaps the most tragic irony in all of human history to date, is in the fact (perhaps I should say probability) that **if they continue to support Israel unconditionally and continue to be silent on Israel’s policies of oppression, the Jews of the world, in America and Europe especially, will lay themselves open at some point to a charge of COMPLICITY IN ZIONISM’S CRIMES. And that would greatly assist the transformation of anti-Israelism into anti-Semitism... This is the essence of the case for saying that the Jews of the world have a vested SELF-INTEREST in distancing themselves from the Zionist monster.**

Question: Will they ever do so in big enough numbers to cause Judaism and Zionism to go their separate ways?

If reason based on the facts as they actually are in Israel/Palestine was allowed to prevail, the combination of self-interest and moral necessity ought to be enough to guarantee a “Yes”

answer. But could it be that it's already too late because most Jews of the world, conditioned by their history and Zionist propaganda, are and will remain beyond reason on the matter of justice for the Palestinians?

I don't pretend to know the answer to this question. I am only asking it.

Footnote

Under the headline *Eradicating Israel*, Gideon Levy's latest article in *Ha-aretz* ought to be required reading for all Jews everywhere. It includes this:

"With the exception of a few anti-Semitic players, marginal and deluded, no one thinks about it (eradicating Israel). It is only we Israelis who cling to the concept: Caution, annihilation ahead... A highly armed regional power, with nearly every kind of weapon at its disposal, economically and scientifically advanced, recognized by most of the countries in the world, a member of nearly every important international organization and with global influence that far outstrips its size, an ally of the world's sole superpower, claims that its existence is under threat. That's bullshit."